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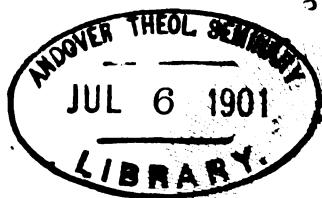
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THE
Metropolitan Tabernacle
Pulpit.

SERMONS PREACHED AND REVISED

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

DURING THE YEAR 1876.

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TO
THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH
IN
THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS,
BE ALL HONOUR AND GLORY
WORLD WITHOUT END,
AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER, AS THE COVENANT GOD
OF ISRAEL;
TO THE GRACIOUS SON, THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE;
TO THE HOLY GHOST THE AUTHOR OF
SANCTIFICATION;
BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF THE
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HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PRIDE CATECHIZED AND CONDEMNED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 2ND, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”—1 Corinthians iv. 7.

PRIDE grows apace like other ill weeds. It will live on any soil. In the natural heart it flourishes, springing up without sowing, and growing without watering; and even in the renewed heart it all too readily takes root when Satan casts abroad a handful of its seed. Of all creatures in the world the Christian is the last man who ought to be proud; and yet, alas, we have had mournful evidence both in past history and in our own observation, and worst of all in our own personal experience, that Christian men may become lifted up, to their own shame. Paul set himself very earnestly to deal with this disease when he saw it raging among the Corinthians. He felt it needful to do so, for it was leading to other mischiefs of the most disgraceful kind. Pride and self-conceit had led the members of the church in Corinth to choose for themselves distinct leaders, and to arrange themselves under separate banners: the followers of this man thinking themselves better than the followers of that. Thus the body of Christ was divided, and all sorts of ill feeling, jealousy, emulation, and envy sprang up in the church of God where all ought to have been mutual helpfulness and loving unity. Paul therefore earnestly, and with great wisdom, assailed the spirit of pride.

Paul was well aware of one fact, namely, that pride is shallow and superficial. It cannot endure honest questioning, and so Paul tried it by the Socratic method, and put it through a catechism. He puts three questions to it in this verse, and these three all called upon his friends to go a little lower in their contemplation of themselves than their pride had before allowed them to go. Pride said, “I have such and such gifts”; but Paul replied, “What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” Thus he digged deeper and undermined pride. The receipt of those gifts from God it had forgotten

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altogether; therefore, by bringing that fact to mind the apostle took pride right under the root, and that is always the best way to destroy a weed. To cut off the green top, and leave the crown of the root so that it may spring up in the next shower, or the next sunshine, is of no avail; but to go deep down and tear up the root is effectual: this Paul did with pride by reminding the vainglorious Corinthians that the gifts which they possessed were no ground of glory, because they had received them as alms from the charity of God.

Another truth is also illustrated by Paul's procedure, namely, that pride is always inconsistent with the true doctrine of the gospel. You may use this test concerning any preaching or teaching that you meet with: if it legitimately and logically leads a man to boast of himself, it is not true. Our chemists use litmus to discover the presence of acid in any liquid submitted to them, for the paper then takes a reddish tint; and you may use this as your test, that when a doctrine makes you red with pride it contains the acid of falsehood. That which puffs up is not of God, but that which lays the man low, and exalts Jesus Christ, has at least two of the tokens of truth. That which glorifies man cannot have been revealed by God, for he has said that no flesh shall glory in his presence. Such teaching may appear very lustrous with affected holiness, and very fascinating with pretended spirituality, and there may be much in your fondest desires which inclines your heart towards it, as there always is in the novelties of the present day, but try it whether it be of God by the test which is here suggested. If with a sleek hand it brushes your feathers the right way, and makes you feel "What a fine fellow I am," you ought at once to flee from it. The very fact that it flatters you should be to you like a fog horn to warn you of danger. Say to every doctrine which fosters pride, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God and of truth, or thou wouldst not speak so well of me."

My object this morning shall be to attempt to do with our own pride what Paul sought to do with that of the Corinthians, namely, to go a little deeper than we generally go when measuring our own abilities; and then I shall try to use the silver spade of the doctrines of grace, so that this hemlock of pride may be taken up by the roots. Looking at the text I notice, first, *a question to be answered with ease*—"Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" secondly, *a question to be answered with shame*—"Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" and then, thirdly, I shall occupy your attention a few minutes with *other questions which these questions suggest*. May the Holy Spirit graciously bless the word.

I. In a two-fold form the apostle gives us A QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED WITH EASE. There may be some who would be puzzled with these questions, but I do not suppose there are any such people present; at any rate, there are no such members of our church. When we are asked, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" our answer is immediately, "God by his grace has made us to differ:" and if we are asked, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" we reply, "We have nothing but our sin; for every good gift and every

perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

We are the more glad to hear Paul say this, because he was what is nowadays styled a "self-made" man. It very frequently happens that a man who makes himself has very great respect for his maker. Is it not natural that he should worship his creator? Paul was a man who, as far as the Christian church is concerned, at any rate, had forced his way up without aid from others. He began in that church with no respect, but under very much suspicion. The brethren had heard that he persecuted the saints, so that at first they would scarce receive him; his name was a terror rather than a pleasure; but Paul, with that high spirit, that consecrated ardour, that indefatigable industry, that wondrous courage of his, backed, of course, by the grace of God, came to the front until he could honestly claim, without egotism, that he was "not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles, though," said he, "I be nothing." Paul was a man who had not been borne upon the crest of the wave into an eminent position, he did not wake up one morning and find himself famous, but he had put forth all his powers in the struggle of life, and laboured with persistent energy year after year. When he persecuted the saints of God he did it ignorantly, in unbelief, and thought he did God service; and all his life long for him to know a thing to be right was to strive after it. He had been kept from self-seeking and deceit, he had been an intensely active, strong-minded, high-souled man, and he had done a grand life-work by which the church is still affected; and yet Paul himself had nothing whereof to glory. His testimony to his own indebtedness to God's grace is so plain, and given so many times over, that we cannot mistake it. He says distinctly, "By the grace of God I am what I am." He counted his own righteousness as worthless, and only desired that he might be found in Christ, arrayed in the righteousness which is of God by faith. Do we address to-day any self-made man, as the world calls men who have risen from the ranks? Have you taken credit to yourself, dear friend, for your success in life? Do you plume yourself upon your having risen by your own exertions? Then cease from such boasting, and in the spirit of the apostle ask yourself the question, "Who maketh thee to differ, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

Our question is easy to answer, whether it be applied to natural gifts or to spiritual ones. There is a tendency to boast in *natural gifts*, but if questioned concerning them we must give the self-evident answer that any natural gifts we possess are not to be set to our credit, but were bestowed on us by God. Some gifts come to us as the result of *birth*, and of course in that matter we had no hand. It may be we were born of Christian parents, and that pedigree is one for which we shall always be thankful: we had sooner number our parents with the saints of God than with the peers of the realm: but truly, brethren, we should be foolish to boast of godly ancestors, for we had not the choosing of them. Children of pious parents, you cannot look with disdain even upon those who are basely born, for you did not cause yourselves to be born any more than they did.

From their birth some derive physical strength. It always seems to me to be a very insane thing for a man to glory in his animal force, for

there can be no merit in it ; yet there are some who do so. In the strength of those brawny limbs of theirs, and those powerful muscles, some vaunt themselves abundantly. Though the Lord taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man, yet some count it a very wonderful thing that they can outleap or outrun their fellows. O athlete, though thou be strong as Samson, or swift as Asahel, what hast thou that thou hast not received ? Hadst thou been born with a tendency to consumption, or with some other hereditary weakness, couldst thou have prevented it ? And now that thou art strong, art thou to be praised for that any more than a horse or a steam engine ?

The same is true of beauty of person, which too frequently is the cause of vanity. Beauty is often a snare on this account. What if thy features be delicately chiselled, what if thine eyes are bright as the morning, and thy countenance fair as the lily, what if there be a charm in thine every glance ; what hast thou in all these for which to praise thyself ? Jezebel also was fair to look upon, and is she to be praised ? Is not thy beauty the gift of God ? Bless thy Creator for it, but do not despise those who are less comely, for in so doing thou wilt despise their Maker. How often do we hear a laugh raised behind their backs against persons who are somewhat grotesque, or it may be deformed ; but God made them, and who is he that shall dare to taunt the Maker with what he has done ? What hast thou, O thou fairest among women ; what hast thou, O thou comeliest among the sons of men, but what thou hast received ? Cease, then, those mincing airs and tossings of the head.

The same is true with regard to the rank which comes of birth. Some men are born—according to heraldic arrangements—noble. In what way is a new-born babe noble ? Can true nobility arise out of anything but personal character ? They are, however, born with the repute of nobility, and are at once regarded with respect. Are they not our future rulers ? Through no deed or desert, or talent or heroism of their own, some are as it were by accident, or rather by the sovereign ordinance of providence, placed above others, wherefore then should they glory in what is so purely a matter of gift ? O thou who art great and honourable amongst men, what hast thou but what thou hast received ? Walk in lowly gentleness, and live with true nobility of character, and so make thy rank a blessing.

Brethren and sisters, how much all of us owe in the matter of birth for which we sometimes take to ourselves credit. We have never fallen, perhaps, into the grosser immoralities, but should we not readily have done so if we had been huddled together in chambers where decency struggles for existence, or been compelled to take our walks abroad where blasphemy and vice contend with law and order, and are not to be subdued ? If the worst of examples had been before us instead of the best, what might we not have become ? We have sinned enough as it is, but very much of the fact that we have not sinned more must be laid rather to the account of our having commenced life under favourable circumstances than to any meritorious conduct of our own. In this respect, what have we that we did not receive ? You have been honest, thank God for it : but you might have been a thief if your father had been so. You have been chaste

and modest, be glad of it : you might not have been so had you been encompassed with other surroundings. You are at this time respected and reputable, and you carry on business in an upright manner ; had you been as poor as some, you might have been tempted to as dirty transactions as they are chargeable with. In these common matters of morality we cannot tell how much we owe to birth, and how little to ourselves. Certainly self-applause ceases as we hear the question, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

In the matter of *talent* there are very great differences. One man will very soon make his way in the world where others fail. Put him where we will, he will make his fortune ; and his friends laughingly say that if he were transported to the desert of Sahara he would sell the sand at a profit. But who gave him that talent? What has he that he has not received? Another can study an art or a science and become proficient in it in a short time ; as a boy he is a leader at school, and as a man he is eminent in his sphere ; still, are not his wisdom and insight gifts from heaven? Another man has the gift of eloquence, and can speak well, while his fellow has the pen of a ready writer. In either of these gifts a man may take so much content as by-and-by to become vainglorious, but the truth taught in our text ought always to prevent that folly. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" That which God gave to thee he might have withheld, and the man whom thou despisest might have had thy gifts : he would have been foolish to despise thee if thou hadst been without them, and thou art foolish now to despise him.

What differences there are, too, as to what men are helped to make of themselves by *education*. Now-a-day there is a better opportunity of education for all ranks and conditions of men, for which I am earnestly thankful, and hope that true religion will be connected with the advantage ; but all boys trained in the same school do not leave it equally educated. One is quick, and another dull ; one manages to place himself foremost, and another is doomed to be in the rear. Whether the difference be in the original conformation of the man, or be the result of different teaching, the result must alike be subject for thankfulness to God, for whether it be natural talent or excellent education, both are received.

Equally so is it with *wealth*. I may address some one to whom God has given large substance ; but, my dear friend, in the course of the accumulation of that substance you have had plenty of evidence that "it is God that giveth thee power to get wealth." There was a time when you had little enough, and it was a singular providence which put you in the way of rising. There have been times, too, when a little turn of the scale would have sent you into bankruptcy, but the markets went the other way, and you were made. You have seen others who were ahead of you in the race of prosperity left far behind, and though God has prospered you I know there have been anxious moments when you have had to lift up your eyes to the Most High, and beseech him by his tenderness and mercy to help and deliver you. Well, inasmuch as this wealth is a blessing if you know how to use it rightly, ascribe the possession of it to God, who has made you his steward. Do you tell me that you have had a keener eye and exercised more industry

than others, as well as a better judgment? True, but who gave you the judgment, and who gave you the health with which to be industrious? Many another man has been as industrious, and yet has failed; many another has been as willing to work, but he has been disabled by sickness; many another man has had as keen an eye, but alas, his judgment has been baffled by misfortune; another man began life with as clear a brain as you, but now he is confined in the asylum and you still are in possession of all your faculties. O sirs, never sacrifice to your own net and drag, and say, "We brought up these treasures from the deep"; but bless God who gave you all that you have of earthly things, for what have you that you have not received? I would that you felt more than you do that you are only stewards, that your possessions are lent to you to be used for God's glory and the good of others, and neither to be squandered nor hoarded for yourselves.

But now, brothers and sisters, this is very emphatically true as to *our spiritual gifts*, and I invite you to consider this truth—"What hast thou that didst not receive?" There has long been a great doctrinal discussion between the Calvinists and the Arminians upon many important points. I am myself persuaded that the Calvinist alone is right upon some points, and the Arminian alone is right upon others. There is a great deal of truth in the positive side of both systems, and a great deal of error in the negative side of both. If I was asked, "Why is a man damned?" I should answer as an Arminian answers, "He destroys himself." I should not dare to lay man's ruin at the door of divine sovereignty. On the other hand, if I were asked, "Why is a man saved?" I could only give the Calvinistic answer, "He is saved through the sovereign grace of God, and not at all of himself." I should not dream of ascribing the man's salvation in any measure to himself. I have not found, as a matter of fact, that any Christian people care seriously to quarrel with a ministry which contains these two truths in fair proportions. I find them kicking at the inferences which are supposed to follow from one or the other of them, and sometimes needlessly crying to have them "reconciled;" but the two truths together, as a rule, commend themselves to the conscience, and I feel sure that if I could bring them both forward this morning with equal clearness I should win the assent of most Christian men. At this time, however, I have to confine myself to the statement that all the grace we have is the gift of God to us, and I trust none will, therefore, suppose that I deny the other side of the question. I believe assuredly that we have nothing good in us but what we have received. For instance, we were dead in trespasses and sin, and we were quickened into spiritual life: my brethren, did that life spring out of the ribs of death? Did the worm of our corruption beget the living seed of regeneration? It were absurd to think so. God be praised for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, which led him to quicken us by his grace. We have been forgiven our great sins—wholly forgiven; through the precious blood of Christ we have been made clean. Did we deserve it? Does any man who professes to be a Christian say for a single moment that he deserved the ransom paid by Christ, and

deserved the pardon of his sin? It would be monstrous blasphemy even to imagine such a thing. Oh no; "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." God forgave us freely; there could not possibly have been any quality in sin which could have called forth forgiving love. He had mercy upon us because he would have mercy upon us; not because we could claim anything at his hand.

Everything, dear friend, that makes you to *differ from the common sinner* is the gift of God's grace to you. You know it is. You have faith in Christ: yes, but did not the Holy Spirit work it in you? Do you not cheerfully subscribe to the doctrine that faith is of the operation of God? You have repentance of sin, but was the repentance natural to you? Did you not receive it from him who is exalted on high to give repentance? Is not your repentance his gift? "Truly," one will say, "but then the same gospel was preached to others as to us." Precisely so. Perhaps the very sermon which was the means of your conversion left others as they were. What made the difference then? Do you reply, "We willed to believe in Jesus." That is true; an unwilling faith would be no faith: but then who influenced your will? Was your will influenced by some betterness of nature in you so that you can claim credit for it? I for one reject with abhorrence any such an idea. Do you reply, "Our will was influenced by our understanding, and we chose what we knew to be best." But then, who enlightened your understanding? Who gave you the light which illuminated your mind, so that you chose the way of life? "Oh," say you, "but our hearts were set towards salvation, and the hearts of others were not." That also is true, but then who set your heart that way, who was the prime mover? Were you or God? There is the question, and if, my dear brother, you dare affirm that in the matter of your own salvation you were the prime mover I am at a loss to understand you, and I hope there are few of your creed. Jesus is not Alpha to you. You do not love him because he first loved you. You were evidently not converted, or turned at all, but you turned yourself. You are not a new creature, but are your own new-creator. Do you look to see the same thing in others? Why, then, do you act as you do? Why do you pray the Lord to turn others if you believe that he did not turn you? Do you pray the Lord to convert your children? Why do you do it? If it is left entirely to them to be the prime movers, why pray to God about them? "Ah," says one, "God must treat all alike." I ask again, why do you pray for your children? You ask God to do a wrong thing in blessing your children in preference to other people, if it be true that he is bound to treat all alike. When you go practically to work these sentiments do not hold water. The man who knows that the Holy Spirit was first in his operations upon the mind, and who calls Christ Jesus the Alpha and the Omega of his salvation, is the man who can fairly go to the Lord, and pray for the conversion of this man or that; and he too is sure to give God all the glory of his salvation, and magnify and bless the grace of the Most High.

Perhaps, my dear brother, there is a difference *between you and other saints*. I am sure there is reason for some saints to eclipse others, for some professors are very poor things indeed. Well, brother, you have

a great deal more faith than others ; where did you get it ? If you received it from anywhere but from God, you had better get rid of it. Dear brother, you have more joy than some, and possibly you feel ashamed of your fellow Christians who are so doubting and sad : beware that you do not become vain of your joy, and remember, that if your joy is true joy you received it of the Lord. Are you more useful than others ? You cannot help looking at certain professors who are idle, and wishing that you could stir them up. I know I do ; I would put a sharp pin into their downy cushions if I could : but for all that who gives us activity, who gives us usefulness, who gives us zeal, who gives us courage, who gives us everything ? If you, dear friend, get into such a condition that you begin to whisper to yourself, "I have improved my gifts and graces at a very noble rate, and am getting on exceedingly well in spiritual things," you will soon have to come down from your high places. If you register yourself A 1 at Lloyd's I will not sail with you, brother, for I fear your proud barque will tempt the tempest ; I would rather sail with some poor Christian man whose weather-beaten vessel would go to the bottom if Jesus were not on board, for I am persuaded he is safe. "Blessed is the man that feareth always." Blessed is the man who lies low at the foot of the cross, and who, concerning everything that he has, whether temporal or spiritual, ascribes all to the Giver of all Good.

Now we must pass on briefly to think of the second point.

II. HERE IS A QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED WITH SHAME. "If thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it ?" If any of us have fallen into vain glory, and we all have more or less done so, let us answer this question with confusion of face. Brother, sister, have you gloried in anything you have received ? Then bethink you how wrongly you have acted, for you have robbed God of his honour. To glory in man is altogether inconsistent with glorying in God. Depend upon it every particle of praise we take to ourselves is so much stolen out of the revenues of the King of kings. Will a man rob God ? Will a redeemed man rob God ? Will a poor sinner snatched from between the jaws of death and hell by undeserved mercy, rob God ? Lord have mercy upon us.

When we boast we also leave our truthful position, and every Christian ought to be ashamed to stand anywhere but in the truth. When I confess myself to be weak, helpless, and ascribe all I have to grace, then I stand in the truth ; but if I take even the remotest praise to myself, I stand in a lie. The Lord have mercy upon us if we have dared to act falsehood in his presence.

Let us remember, too, that whensoever we prize ourselves highly we are sure to esteem our Lord less. Do you see any spiritual beauty in yourself ? Then it is because you do not know what true beauty is ? Do you say, "I am rich and increased in goods" ? Then you know nothing, or very little, of what true wealth is. You have mistaken gilt for gold, and rags for raiment. I counsel thee buy of Jesus gold tried in the fire, and fine linen wherewith thou mayest be clothed. Depend upon it our judgment is very much like a pair of scales : if Christ goes up self goes down ; and if self rises Jesus falls in our esteem. No man ever sets a high price upon self and Christ at the same time.

"The more thy glories strike mine eyes
The humbler I shall be,"

is a rule without exception.

Besides, if you and I have gloried in what we possess we have undervalued our fellow Christians, and that is a great sin. They are very dear to Jesus, and he accounts even their deaths precious. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones that believe in me"; but if we over-estimate ourselves the natural consequence is that we under-estimate others. Have I ever thought, "I am a rich man; and these poor people, though good Christians, are nobodies compared to me; I am of far more consequence to the church"? Have I conceived, because I have a measure of talent, that those holy men and women who cannot speak for Christ are of no great account? Or have I, because I happened to be an old, experienced Christian, snuffed out the young ones, and said "They are only a pack of boys and girls"? Is this the way to speak of those who were bought with the blood of Christ, and are members of Christ's body? It will not do for us to despise the meanest saint. I believe there are many who are now pushed into the background and shoved into any hole and corner whom Christ looks upon with special delight, and will place first when he comes. Verily I say unto you, "There are first that shall be last, and there are last that shall be first."

Besides, all this honouring of ourselves generally puts us off from the right course as to our gifts, and makes us forget that these things are only lent us, to be used for our Master. It is required of stewards that they be found faithful, not that they vaunt themselves and deck themselves in their Master's goods. We have too much to do to afford to boast. Look at yonder young soldier who has just received his armour and his helmet. He has just entered the service. Look with what pleasure he sees his comely face reflected in his breast-plate; how much he admires his plume; he thinks how grand he shall look in such gear. My dear fellow, all this while you have forgotten that to wear these things in the thick of the battle, where they will bear the dint of the sword, is what awaits you, and you do not consider that, not your gallant appearance, but your valour is what we want to see. When a man exalts himself because of what he possesses, he does not act as a soldier of the cross should do.

Here we will insert an illustration or two. There is a tendency in some to exalt themselves because God has placed them in *office*. They are ministers, deacons, elders, superintendents, or something. What mighty airs they give themselves! "Honour to whom honour is due"—they seem to have learned the text by heart, and to have seen a personal reference in it. Have you never seen the footmen of princes when they are playing the great man? What wonders of nature and art they often are. I was admiring one of them the other day, with all the reverence due. The vision of his pomp quite staggered me, for he was so gorgeous to look upon. I feel sure that his royal master was nothing like so striking, and certainly could not have been more pompous or aristocratic. While I was looking on with due wonder and reverence, somebody cruelly remarked, "What a funkey!"—a most irreverent observation, and yet very natural. My brothers, whenever

you and I, because we have our best clothes on, and are ministers, or deacons, or elders, act as if we were very great men, somebody or another is sure to call us flunkies too ; not perhaps exactly in so many words, but in language to the same effect. Do not let us expose ourselves to such contempt, and if ever we have done so, let us be rebuked at once by the thought of what we have seen in others.

Some persist in boasting about their experience. This also is vanity. Suppose a man here, who is a great pedestrian, has been over the Alps, and traversed Europe ; here is his walking stick, and it boasts, " I am the most travelled walking stick in creation, I have smitten the craggy brows of the Alps and bathed myself in the Nile." " Well," says one, " but wherever you have gone you have been carried by a power beyond yourself." So let the man who boasts in experience remember that in the paths of peace he has gone nowhere except as the Lord's hand has borne him onward ; he has been nothing but a staff in God's hands, and while he should be grateful he should never be proud.

I was in a beautiful garden the other day, upon the rocks, where the choicest of flowers and tropical plants are growing : while all around the rocks are bare, with scarce a trace of vegetable life. Now, suppose that garden were proud, and boasted of its fruitfulness. The answer would be, " Every basketful of earth had to be carried up to you, and you would not bear fruit now if it was not for the stream of water that is turned on, and tracked through many little mazes, and brought to the root of each plant you bear ; you would be a rock again in a few months if you were left to yourself ; therefore let the former of the garden rejoice in his work, but the garden itself may not glory." That is what the most fruitful believer would be if God let him alone—a barren rock, a wilderness.

Suppose I address some Christian who is happy, and joyous, and cheerful, and has such dainty bits sent home to him out of the promises, such precious words from Scripture applied to his heart. Dear friend, are you apt to think that there is something specially good about you because you get all these remarkable enjoyments ? Then let me disabuse your mind. It is your weakness which gets you these favours. When you are living in a hotel you will remark that certain persons have their dinners sent upstairs. What for ? Oh, that is because they are ill. If you are well you must go down to the *table d'hôte* with the rest ; but if you are ill they will send it upstairs, and pay you extra attention. These very comforts that God gives you ought to make you enquire whether there is not something amiss with you, and instead of thinking you are strong and well you should search and see if there is not some weakness which the Lord in his mercy intends to remove by the double comforts which he gives to you. Nothing in the world ought to be a cause of self-exaltation ; nothing that our God gives us ought to make us think highly of ourselves. Lower down, brother, lower down, and so you will rise. The way to heaven is downhill, not uphill. As Christ went down to the grave that he might come up again and fill all things, so must you go to the cross, and down to the grave of self and be buried with Christ, and learn the meaning of your baptism, and make it true that you are buried with him to all

the world, and to yourself also, for so only can you rise into the fulness of the new life.

III. OTHER QUESTIONS WHICH THESE QUESTIONS SUGGEST shall now, in the third place, occupy our attention. What are they?

The first is this. *Have I ever given to God his due place in the matter of my salvation?*—a question that I may very well put, for I recollect when I was converted to God, and truly converted too, but I did not know that it was the work of the Spirit in my heart; I did not understand that it was the result of special grace. I had heard the gospel generally preached, but I had not learned the peculiar doctrines of grace; and I recollect very well sitting down and thinking to myself, “I am renewed in my mind, I am forgiven, I am saved: how came that about?” and I traced it to this, that I had heard the gospel, but as I knew that many never had an opportunity of hearing it, I saw special grace in my having had the opportunity to hear it. But then I said, “There are others who have heard it, but it was not blessed to them: how came it to be blessed to me?” and I cogitated for awhile whether it could be something good in me that made the gospel useful to me, for if so I deserved to have the credit of it. Somehow the grace which God had given me made me fling that theory to the winds, and I came to this conclusion, “It must be God that made the difference,” and having got that one thought into my mind, the doctrines of grace followed as a matter of course. Only by experimentally knowing that there has been a special work of grace in your own soul, will you be likely to place the Lord where he should be in your creed, for some provide a very inferior place for the Lord in the matter of their salvation. With them man is very great, and God is made little of; but true theology makes God the very sun of the system, the centre, the head, the first, and chief. Have you done so? If not, correct your views, and get a clearer view of the gospel of grace. May the Holy Spirit help you therein. To know the doctrines of grace will be much to your comfort, will tend to your stability, and will also lead you to seek the glory of God.

The next question is this, *Have I this morning the spirit of humble gratitude?* How do I feel? Do I take God's mercy as a matter of course, and view my own gifts without thankfulness? Then I act like the brutes that perish, but let me pray this morning that humble, lowly gratitude may daily rule my spirit. Such gratitude will make you cheerful, it will make you earnest, it will in fact be an atmosphere in which all Christian graces will grow by the blessing of God's Spirit.

Next, seeing I have been a receiver, what have I done towards giving out again? It cannot have been intended that I should receive and never give out, for if that be the case there is a sad lot for me. You know they used to make, and do still make, in the North of England, earthenware saving boxes for the children. You can put what you like in, but you cannot get it out any more until you break the box; and there are persons of that sort among us. Some have died lately, and their estates have been reported in the Probate Court. There was plenty put in to them, but you could never get anything out, and consequently they had to be broken up. I only hope when they were broken up the gold and silver went the right way. What a pity to be like

money boxes, to be of no good until you are broken up. One would like to get and give at the same time. We ought not to be as a stagnant pond, a Dead Sea, which receives from rivers all the year round, but gives forth no stream in return, and so becomes a stagnant, putrid lake. Let us be like the great lakes of America, which receive the mighty rivers and pour them out again, and consequently keep fresh and clear.

The next question is—Since what I have had I have received by God's grace, might I not receive more? Come, brothers and sisters, with regard to gracious things I want you to be covetous. Covet earnestly the best gifts. If you have had faith, why should you not have more? If God gave you hope, joy, experience, why not more? You are not straitened in him; you can be only straitened in yourself. Try to remove those hindrances, and ask the Lord to give you more grace.

One other question—If all that Christians have they have received, sinner, why should not you receive as well as they? If it were true that Christians got these good things out of themselves, then you, poor sinner, might despair, for you know you have no good thing in you; but if the best of saints, the best Christian in heaven, has not anything but what he received, why should not you receive? To receive, you know, is never a difficult thing. I warrant you that out of all the people in London there is not a man but what could receive. Try it on the present occasion. Let it be a thousand pounds, and see how many among us would be unable to receive. If there be a person about who would not receive, I tell you who it is—it is the man who thinks himself so rich that he does not care to have any more. Even so the proud, self-righteous Pharisee cannot receive; but you poor, good-for-nothing, empty sinners can receive; and here is the mercy—"to as many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name." Open that empty hand, open that empty heart: God grant they may be opened now by his own divine Spirit, and may you receive, and then I know you will join with us in saying, "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm ciii. and
1 Corinthians iv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103 (Vers. 1.), 233, 235.

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A GOD READY TO PARDON.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 9TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thou art a God ready to pardon."—Nehemiah ix. 17.

WHEN a man's conscience is so awakened to the existence of sin that he cannot perceive any plea for mercy within himself, it is his wisdom to look for a plea in the nature and character of God. Now, brethren, if we search ourselves through and through, we cannot find anything in our fallen nature which can recommend us to the Most High. If we think that we have a claim upon God's goodness, we are in darkness, and deceive ourselves. When the true light comes, it reveals our bareness of all merit or excuse, and shows that there is nothing in human nature but that which provokes the Lord. This is the fact as to our condition while we are unregenerate, and oftentimes the true believer, when darkness gathers around him, finds himself to be in much the same condition. His evidences burn dimly, the candle of the Lord seems quenched within his spirit, and, worst of all, the sun of divine favour is not discernible; then groping all around he can discover nothing in himself but that which causes him to sigh and groan, being burdened. In such a plight he should cast overboard the great anchor of faith, and escape from himself to his God. It were well for him always to do so, but especially in the cloudy and dark day. To whom should he turn for light but to the Sun of Righteousness? Where look for grace but to the God of all grace? Where for all but to the All in all? If what *I* am makes me despair, let me consider what *God in Christ* is and I shall have hope.

That God is merciful becomes to sinners the first point upon which they can fix their hope: that the mercy of God endureth for ever affords to the saints a most blessed stronghold when inward sin assails the soul. But whence do we learn this supremely consoling truth? How do we know that God is merciful? I scarcely think we should have inferred from his works the readiness of God to show mercy. I have heard a great deal about the attributes of God in nature:

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I have, indeed, heard a great deal more than I have ever been able to see. To "go from nature up to nature's God" is a very common expression, but it is a very long step, mark you, from the highest Alp of nature to the footstool of the throne of God. It will be found much easier to go down from God to nature when you once know the Lord than ever it can be to ascend from the works to the Maker. It is more than questionable whether the best instructed mind could have discovered much of God's moral nature from the universe around—his goodness to obedient creatures we might have gathered, but his mercy to the guilty is there but dimly revealed. Look at this visible universe and you perceive that it is governed by certain fixed laws. If a man offends against these laws, do the laws bend, and make allowance for his mistake? Not so, they operate immutably, and every violation of them is avenged. The captain makes a mistake of a few points in his steering—there is a current which he has not perceived, or perhaps his compass itself is out of gear; anyhow, he is, without any fault on his part, drifted upon a rock. Does the rock move, or is it softened? or when the ship strikes is there some miracle by which the timbers are held together? Does some angelic hand undergird the ship and preserve the precious lives? No, amidst the howling of the pitiless storm the vessel breaks up, and those who struggle best are unable to survive the fury of the sea. Is there any sign of mercy here? Or take another case: the simple countryman, in his ignorance of the laws of electricity, is overtaken by a pelting storm, and to escape from the drenching rain he runs beneath some lofty tree to screen himself beneath its spreading branches. It is a law of nature that elevated points should attract the lightning: the man does not know this, he does not intend to defy his Maker's natural law, but for all that, when the death-dealing fluid splits the tree it leaves a senseless corpse at the foot thereof. The law does not suspend its operations though that man may be the husband upon whose life the bread of many children may depend, though he may have been one of the most guileless and prayerful of mankind, though he may have been utterly unconscious of having exposed himself to the force of a physical law of God, yet still he dies, for he has placed himself in the way of a settled law of nature, and it takes its course. There is scant trace of mercy here. Or it may be that a physician in the pursuit of discoveries which shall alleviate pain, with no ambition except to serve his fellow creatures, no mercenary motive swaying him, endeavours to penetrate into the secrets of nature, and imbibes or inhales a certain noxious drug or pernicious vapour. Will the noxious drug or destructive gas stay its deadly office because of the generosity of the motive of the man who exposes himself to its influence? Ah, not so, the precious life is sacrificed, and we hear the sad news that a great physician is no more; nature having stood fast and firm, and no mercy having been shown to the breaker of her laws. Now, seeing that these laws move on immutably like the great wheels of a mighty machine, and he that is entangled in those wheels is ground to powder, it does seem as if we had slight evidence of the mercy of God if we look to nature alone: certainly not enough to calm the conscience or allay the fears of the guilty. We admit that there are

some tokens for good to the offender, even in nature, for does not the Lord teach man to set up his beacons upon the headland and anchor his light-ships near the sands, and has he not led us up to the formation of life-boats whereby multitudes of lives have been saved? In the case of death by lightning there is reason to believe that the death is more certainly painless than any other; and, again, loftiness need not remain a danger, for the lightning conductor has warded off the bolt of heaven from multitudes of elevated buildings. In the case of most poisons there are antidotes which save life if they are taken speedily enough, and even the poisons themselves, in certain compounds, turn out to be healing medicines. So there are traces of the pardon of offences in the mitigating or the removing of penalties even under the iron rule of natural law. Never is a law changed, mark you, in nature, except in the few instances of miraculous interpositions; and in the moral universe never is a law changed at all, for heaven and earth shall pass away but not one jot or one tittle of the law shall fail. Still there are laws which counteract full frequently the roughness and the crushing power of other laws; and these, like their counterparts in the moral universe, prove that God is merciful. But, all this being allowed, the light which nature affords us is, upon this subject, rather conjecture than assurance. My brethren, let us thank God we are not left to mere guesses upon this point, we are not left to the sun and to the moon to give us light upon this matter; we have a more sure word of testimony whereunto ye do well if ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. We have this book of Holy Scripture written by the pen of the Holy Spirit, which tells us over and over again that the God whom we have offended is a God ready to pardon, a God whose mercy endureth for ever.

I would call your attention to the expression, "*a God ready to pardon*," not a God who may possibly pardon; neither a God who upon strong persuasion and earnest pleadings may, at length, be induced to forgive; not one who, perchance, at some remote period after we have undergone a long purgation may manifest a mercy which is now in the background, but a God "*ready to pardon*,"—willing and more than willing—ready, standing prepared, or to use another Scriptural expression, "*waiting to be gracious*." We have a God who stands like a host at a festival, which is all provided and prepared, saying, "*My oxen and my fatlings are provided, all things are ready, come ye to the supper*." Not only are all things ready but God himself is ready, his own heart and hand all ready to bestow pardon upon the guilty ones who come before him. There is forgiveness with him that he may be feared.

This blessed truth, in the first place, was remarkably seen in the story of Israel, on that we will dwell; and secondly, it is equally true of the Lord at all times. May the Holy Spirit in mercy lead us to feel the power of mercy while we speak thereon

I. First, then, I shall ask your attention to THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL AS SINGULARLY ILLUSTRATING THE READINESS OF GOD TO PARDON. Brethren, the Israelites seem to have been set forward as a picture of all God's people. As the foot of the altar was made of the looking-glasses of the women, the polished brass of the mirrors being melted down, so it seems to me as if Israel was intended to be a looking-glass

in which every one of us might look and see his own image. Full sure I am that when I speak of Israel you will perceive that the record speaks of you, and draws your portraits to the life.

They were, in the first place, *a people very specially favoured, but they were a people as specially ungrateful.* To what other nation did God give the oracles of his truth? What other tribes did he separate unto himself to be a people in whose midst he would show forth his glory? What other nation did he bring forth out of the house of bondage with a high hand and a stretched out arm? For what other people did he pour out of heaven the dread artillery of all his plagues, smiting their foes with judgments most terrible? For what other race did he divide the sea that he might lead them through the deep as through a wilderness? What other armies of men had food to eat which dropped from heaven? What other hosts were led and guided for forty years, and supplied without their own labour, without sowing or planting, or reaping, or gathering into barns? Surely the Lord himself was with them, and they were favoured above all the rest of mankind. Who is like unto thee, O Israel, a people chosen of the Lord! But they were just as specially sinful. It scarcely seems to us as if any other nation ever existed who provoked the Lord so much, for they transgressed against light and love, against instruction and illumination, against wooing and warning, against entreaty and rebuke. They rebelled though they knew that they were highly favoured, and were conscious that they were a distinguished and elect people. Their iniquities were committed against a God whose hand they had seen, and whose voice they had heard, as he spoke to them from the top of Sinai. They lived amid a blaze of miracles, and walked a pathway of marvels. God was in the camp, his glory shone forth between the cherubim, and under the symbol of the fiery cloudy pillar his presence was revealed to them all. God was round about them for a wall of fire, and as the glory in their midst: and yet with the Lord before their eyes they refused to see him, and with all his wonders before them they refused to believe. You know, dear friends, that we are always particularly wounded by the unkindness of any to whom we have been specially attentive and generous. We complain, "It was not an enemy, for then I could have borne it, but it was thou, a man, mine acquaintance, my friend." Hard is it to be injured by a child for whom you have endured much self-denial, and to whom you have rendered tenderest love. "Sharper than an adder's tooth is an unthankful child." After this fashion Israel offended, and, speaking after the manner of men, the Lord felt it keenly, he was grieved at his heart, because his great goodness to them had been so basely misused. He cries, "O that they had hearkened unto me," and in another place, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth, I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me." Such is the language which Scripture puts into the mouth of the Lord, and yet he forgave his provoking people times without number—was he not indeed ready to pardon?

Again, the Israelites were *absolutely dependent upon God for everything, and yet they were proud.* Read in the sixteenth verse, "They and our fathers dealt proudly." If any people in the world ought to

have been humble, surely the Israelites were they. They had been slaves in Egypt, and lien among the pots in degraded bondage—brick-makers all of them. Their backs were raw with the lash of the slave-driver, and they cried out under the sore oppression. The Lord chose them in the ignorance and debasement which always come with slavery. When he brought them out they had no treasures but such as they had demanded of their former masters. Their stock of food was very slender, and they had to traverse the arid wilderness. Tied up in bundles on their shoulders, they carried a little food, but that was soon spent, and every day they had to receive bread fresh from God's own ovens, while as for water they would have perished had it not been for the rock whose streams followed them all their way. They were not a people addicted to commerce, they had no opportunities for hunting, there were no means for husbandry; and therefore, if day by day the manna had not fallen, they must have utterly starved. Yet though they were pensioners upon the daily charity of God, and were both fed and clothed by his bounty, still they were proud. I know some others who are much in the same condition, and perhaps they are proud too. Paupers and yet proud! Living on alms and yet boastful! Ah, brethren, but this in Israel was very provoking to God, even as it is in us. Those vagrant mendicants thought themselves somewhat, so that when they were a little tried they began to murmur against Moses, and to accuse their God of bringing them out into the desert to die. They hectorred it very loudly, and with a high stomach, and thought themselves hardly put upon, and would not do this, and would do that, as though they were some great ones, while all the while they were no better than so many birds of the air, which have to gather what God's generous hand is pleased to scatter for their daily food. Was he not a God ready to pardon, to have mercy upon a proud people? Is it not always very hard to forgive a haughty spirited offender? If the offender will humble himself before you there is less difficulty; but if, being absolutely dependent upon you for everything, the offender nevertheless insults you with high words, it becomes very hard to keep your temper with him. Pride is irritating, yea abominable. O Lord, when thou didst forgive the haughtiness of thine erring people, thou wast indeed ready to pardon.

These people, again, *deliberately rebelled*, for the sixteenth and seventeenth verses tell us they "hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, and refused to obey." It was not that they made mistakes, it was not that they fell into errors or were misled; but they did not want to go right, and refused to know what God's will and mind were. They stopped their ears, and closed their eyes. When they asked that the words which the Lord spake from Sinai might not be spoken to them any more, it was but natural that they should dread the terror of the trumpet sound; but deep down in their hearts there was also a distaste for a law so pure, so holy. Their hearts were set on mischief, and they were not to be led in the way of obedience. They had a ready ear for Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who preached sedition, they were ready to be led into idolatrous ceremonies and lustful acts by Moabitish women; but before the Lord they were as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke. Anybody and everybody they

would hearken to except their God, but to him they had such small regard that they cast his ordinances and precepts behind their backs, and sinned again and again with resolute deliberation. They often went astray though often reprov'd. It was not mere error and mistake, but the set and current of their heart was towards evil. Deliberation adds greatly to the heinousness of sin, and it is a sad thing when we have to charge ourselves with this. The repetition of the same offence also shows a state of heart very near akin to determination, for it has all the appearance of a deliberate refusal to watch against temptation, and of a fixed resolve to treat the voice of God with indifference. Alas, that we should be so readily decoyed by the baits of evil, and so feebly held by the cords of goodness. Lord, when we provoke thee in this way be pleased to show thyself a God ready to pardon.

More than this, we are told that the Israelites were *unmindful of what the Lord had done for them*: "Neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them." They were by this unmindfulness led into the great crime of unbelief. You think, my brethren, that if you had seen the Red Sea divided and Israel's hosts led through, while Pharaoh's army was drowned, you would have trusted God all your life. "Oh," say you, "if I had been present, and really gathered the manna and eaten it, I could not, I am sure, with such a demonstration before my eyes, have ever fallen into unbelief again." Well, I leave that question whether you would or not; having a very shrewd suspicion that your heart is by no means better than that of the ancient unbelievers. At any rate Israel soon fell back into her chronic unbelief. Within a few days after they had seen the whole host of Pharaoh destroyed, they began to murmur against God and against Moses; and though every day they ate the manna, and drank the miraculously given water, yet continually they asked, "Is the Lord among us or not?" and they were perpetually putting questions such as made Moses demand of them, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" They were cankered to the heart with unbelief. For a moment they had a sort of faith, but in another moment they relapsed into infidelity.

"Now they believe his Word,
While rocks with rivers flow;
Now with their lusts provoke the Lord,
And he reduced them low."

The slightest peril, the slightest trouble to themselves, they began to think that now they were come to a difficulty out of which the Lord could not deliver them, and they cried, "Surely, he means to destroy us. He will never bring us into the promised land." Do you know any other people like this? I need to put out my hand to touch one of the same order. At any rate, since the Lord forgave his people Israel, though they angered him with their ungenerous mistrust, we see most clearly that he is "a God ready to pardon."

Further on we read that these people *committed in spirit an act of utter apostasy*. They made unto themselves a captain to return to their bondage. They said they would go back to Egypt, since there was no hope of their ever conquering Canaan, for the Canaanites were too strong for them. What, back to slavery! Back to making bricks

without straw ! Leaving God and his tabernacle, and the glory of his presence. What think ye would they go back for ? What was the attractive bait which lured them ? They would return to their taskmasters for the sake of the leeks and the garlic, and the onions, the flavour of which was still in their mouths. Their soul lusted after the fleshpots of Egypt, and they would, to sit down by those savoury cauldrons, go back to the ignoble condition of slavery again, and leave the Lord and all his guardian care, and forego the goodly land, which was but a little way beyond. O foolish people ! Ah, brethren, this is madness, but alas is there not in us, even in us, an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, and have there not been times when we also have been tempted to return to the beggarly elements of the world, and seek content in the grovelling joys of earth ?

Perhaps it was worst of all that the Israelites *did actually fall into shameful idolatry*. They set up the figure of a calf to represent God ; they compared their glory unto the image of an ox that eateth grass, and they said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt." God was incensed at this, as well he might be, nevertheless at the entreaty of Moses he did not utterly destroy them. Oh, brethren, it is a shameful thing when we love the creature more than the Creator, and dare to set up anything which is dear to us in Jehovah's place. "Little children keep yourselves from idols," but if you have had idols, and have been forgiven, then you can see in this history, and in your own experience, that the Lord is ready to pardon.

For a minute I desire to show you the opposite side, namely, the divine goodness. While God forgave this people he showed his readiness to pardon in the following ways. First, *he continued while they were in all these sins to guide them both by night and by day*. The nineteenth verse says, "Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness : the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way ; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go." Only think of it, that very day they made a calf, when the sun went down the fiery pillar still lit up the camp. At that very hour in which they said "We will make to ourselves a captain, and go back to Egypt," the cloud was covering the camp, and screening them from the burning heat of the sun. They sinned beneath the shade of special mercy. Oh, if the Lord had said, "Now I will leave you, I will give you no more guidance. Since you will not follow my commandments, go which way you will," should you have wondered ? If he had left them to faint in the heat of the day and grope in the darkness of the night would you have been surprised ? Ah, but let us wonder to think that the Lord has guided us as pilgrims through this desert land : he has still been both sun and shade to us, even to this day, notwithstanding all our sin. Had he deserted us what countless evils had befallen us. Blessed be the mercy which faileth not.

Another marvellously gracious fact was that *he continued still to teach them*. I am more surprised at this than at the other. Read the twentieth verse—"Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them." I should have thought he would have said, "Moses, take down the tabernacle, roll up the curtains, put away the ark, no more morning

sacrifices, no more evening lambs. Aaron, go home, take off your breastplate, and your ephod, and all your garments, which were made for glory and for beauty. This people shall be taught no longer, they are incorrigible. It is in vain that I dwell among them and walk among them." No, but still he made known his ways among them, and maintained the testimony of his servant Moses, and gave them still those matchless types which set forth so fully the way of salvation. My brethren, bless ye also the Lord that though he has often smitten you, and given you the bread of affliction and the water of affliction, yet he has not taken away your teachers from you, nor quenched the light of Israel. Still doth his good spirit enlighten and instruct the people. Is he not a God ready to pardon?

Nehemiah also notices that *God did not stint them in their daily provisions*, notwithstanding their offences. "Yea," says he, "thou withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst." I am struck with wonder to think that God should have caused his manna still to fall. They provoked Moses and they set up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, but that very morning God's bread was in their mouths. They came up to speak against God and against his servant, but their tongues would have been cleaving to the roof of their mouths for thirst if that very morning they had not drunk of the water which God had given them. When dependent persons will persist in disregarding our remonstrances and violating our rules, we are driven to stop the supplies. But the Lord did not stop the supplies even in this urgent case. Would not famine and drought have brought them to their senses? If there had been no food for the women and children, and no drink for the strong men, would not that have tamed them? Even lions and savage beasts may be thus subdued. But no, their bread was given them, and their water was sure. Was he not a God ready to pardon?

One other remark here, and it is this,—*he did sustain them to the end and ultimately bring them into the land of promise*. "Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing: their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. Their children also multipliedest thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers that they should go in to possess it." Yes, and I know a people who, despite their sins, have already taken possession of many a gracious promise, so that they already dwell in the midst of covenant blessings. I know a people too who, notwithstanding their sins, shall enter into rest. "He shall surely bring them in," for he will bring his chosen into his glory, and they shall see his face with joy. Is he not a God ready to pardon?

My tale is all too long for me to tell it. I must cease from this portion of the history and ask you to meditate upon it, and as you do so to admire our pardoning God.

II. Secondly, IT IS EQUALLY TRUE THAT THE LORD AT ALL TIMES IS A GOD READY TO PARDON. It is true of him *by nature*, for mercy is an essential attribute of God. We must never think that our Lord Jesus died to make God merciful; on the contrary, the death of the Lord Jesus is the result of the mercy of God. When man sinned God

was willing enough to pardon him, for the death of a sinner is no pleasure to him. Judgment is his strange work. The way in which the Lord came to Adam at the first shewed his mercy. He came, if you remember, in the cool of the day,—not at the instant the crime was committed. God is not in a hurry to accuse man, or to execute vengeance upon him; he therefore waited until the cool of the day. He did not address rebellious man in the language of indignation, but he kindly said, “Adam, where art thou?” And when he had questioned the guilty pair, and convicted them, and the sentence was passed, it was terrible certainly, but oh how mildly tempered; the curse was as much as possible made to fall obliquely: “cursed is the ground for thy sake.” Though the woman was made to feel great sorrows, yet those were connected with a happy event which causes the travail to be forgotten. There was tenderness in the dread utterances of an offended God, and mainly so because almost as soon as he declared that man must labour and die he promised that the “seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.” Assuredly the Lord our God is by nature very pitiful and full of compassion.

This truth is evident when we remember that God was abundantly ready to pardon, for *he himself removed the impediment which lay in the way of forgiveness*. Being judge of all the earth it was essential to him in that office that sin should never be treated as a light thing, but should be duly punished, lest others rush into it, hoping to escape judgment. For the good of all his creatures, as well as for the glory of his own character, God must not allow sin to go unpunished. The judge may be willing enough to pardon the culprit, but he is a judge, and as such he must condemn the guilty. The readiness of God to pardon was seen in this that at his own cost he provided a way by which his mercy might be consistent with justice. From his own bosom he took his only begotten Son, his own self, for he was one with him; and God, in the person of his Son, suffered that which has honoured justice, vindicated the law, and enabled God to be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Oh, as I see the adorable Father giving up his Well-beloved, to bleed and die for men, I know beyond all question that he is a God ready to pardon.

And now, *the atonement being made*, and justice being unable any longer to offer any protest to boundless mercy, *God stands ready to pardon*. By the blood of his dear Son he is able to blot out offences, through the sweet savour of the sacrifice of Jesus he smiles on guilty men. He delights now to blot into oblivion the transgressions of all them that seek his face.

The Lord’s readiness to pardon is very conspicuous to sinners, because he sends his message of love to them while they are yet in their sins. He presents perfect pardon through Jesus Christ to them, even while they are sinners, for “Christ died for the ungodly.” I love to think that the gospel does not address itself to those who might be supposed to have helped themselves a little out of the mire, to those who show signs of lingering goodness, but it comes to men ruined in Adam and doubly lost by their own sin, it comes to them in the abyss where sin has hurled them and lifts them up from the gates of hell. “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” “The Son of man is

come to seek and to save that which was lost." Jesus Christ's salvation is like the good Samaritan, it comes where the wounded man is, and pours in its oil and wine into his bleeding wounds.

The readiness of God to pardon is to be seen in the fact that he makes no hard conditions with sinners. He does not say, "I will pardon if you suffer this or endure that penance; I will pardon if you perform this act of heroism or that deed of consecration." No, he himself says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Receive what is freely given—that is the gospel precept, and nothing else. Only confess thy transgressions, or, in other words, own thine emptiness, and then trust thy Saviour, and thou art saved.

That he is ready to forgive appears in this yet more glorious fact, that what God demands of man by the gospel he also works in him by his spirit; as for confession of sin he puts the words into the sinner's mouth, repentance he works in the sinner's heart, and saving faith his own Spirit creates in the sinner's soul. Is he not ready to forgive when even what might be called the condition of pardon in one light is under another aspect a gift of free grace?

See ye not his readiness to forgive, when he accepts even the very lowest grade of the necessary graces? Of repentance, so long as it be sincere, he doth accept a tear or a sigh; of faith, though it be but as a grain of mustard seed, he doth accept it if it be but true. And notwithstanding all the faults that are in the sinner, though his heart be neither as tender as it ought to be, nor his knowledge so clear, nor his eye of faith so bright, nor his conversion so complete as it should be, yet God looketh not at any of these faultinesses except to forgive them. The ignorance and shortcoming God winketh at, and he only looks at what he can see of Christ in the sinner. The sinner's plea on his lip is, "for Jesus' sake," the sinner's hope in his heart is "for Christ's sake,"—and it is this that the Father looks at; when he sees that the poor trembling soul has embraced Jesus, his own dear Son, the Father puts the sin away at once without a word, and says, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." Oh, he is indeed a God ready to pardon.

Dear child of God, this text has a bearing upon you, and you can see it in your own self. Observe how the Lord chastens you. "Why is that?" say you. Why, because you have been offending him. You are his child, and he is your Father, and he desires to forgive you, but there is a hindrance. Have you never felt a difficulty about expressing forgiveness to your own child when he has done wrong again and again? There is no difficulty in your heart, for you love him well, but still you do not wish him to think lightly of the fault, and you are afraid that if you at once tell him that you forgive him he may, perhaps, think that he may transgress with impunity. Therefore you chasten him, so that after the chastening has been endured it may be safe for you to pardon—I mean safe as far as he is concerned. He will not be tempted to go into the sin through the readiness with which you forgive him, for he will remember the smarts which your love inflicted. Look upon your chastening as a proof that God is ready to forgive because he executes in wisdom that discipline which is necessary for a safe forgiveness.

Think, too, how lightly he chastens.

“He will not always chide,
And when his strokes are felt,
His strokes are fewer than our crimes,
And lighter than our guilt.”

That rod of his, ah, he never loves it. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. But when he does use it, how quickly he puts it up again. Brethren, note how ready the Lord is to pardon us, for when we have sadly fallen he graciously sets us on our feet again. “He restoreth my soul.” If you have wandered, like Noah’s dove flying over the waste of waters, the Lord will receive you, even as Noah received the weary bird. He put out his hand at once and plucked her in unto him, into the ark, and even thus does the good Spirit pluck us in to himself. He fills our empty spirits again, revives our dying hope, relights the candles of our joy, and makes us once again what we had been, and perhaps more. And then he comes and restores to us his own presence, oh so soon. He says, “For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but in great mercy will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting mercy will I have pity upon thee.” Very loath is he to hide his face, but very swift is he to come on wings of mercy to restore joy to his mourners. Is he not ready to pardon?

I have almost done when I have answered a question on the behalf of the unconverted, and the same on behalf of the children of God. A poor seeker says to me, “You tell us God is ready to pardon, why is it, then, that I have prayed so long for mercy and have not found it?” That was a question I asked once when my prayers went up to heaven, and seemed to smite upon a dome of brass, and were reverberated in my ears. Listen! Dost thou know to what God has promised to give pardon? To prayer! I think if thou wilt read aright he promised pardon to confession, to repentance, and to faith. Hast thou acknowledged thine iniquity? Wilt thou renounce thy sin? Hast thou believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? Come, wilt thou now trust Jesus Christ? Man, thou shalt have pardon now. But if thy prayers are unbelieving prayers thou art going the wrong way to work. Thou mayest as well hope to win heaven by thy works as by thy prayers, for indeed thy prayers are but a kind of work—salvation is by believing, not by praying. If faith be mixed with thy prayer, then wilt thou succeed. Believing is essential, and if thou believest thou shalt have mercy, now at once. “Still,” says another, “I have believed in Jesus Christ, and I hope I am saved from guilt, but how is it if God is ready to pardon that I am still suffering from the result of sin.” This, my friend, you must bear so long as God wills it. God does not make a man healthy if he has brought his body to sickness by sin, neither does he fill a man’s pocket if he has spent his money in profligacy. This, my brother, is left to be a thorn in thy side; not as a token of anger, but because thou art not to be trusted with health or wealth, and God will not lead thee into temptation again. Accept this from the Lord’s hand as a gentle chastening. Remember, if he save thy soul it little matters about the rest, for it will be better for thee to enter into life

halt or maimed than to have all thy limbs, and all the world, and lose thy soul. Accept sickness, or whatever else comes, as the result of sin, and do not think it by any means proves that God has not pardoned thee—on the contrary, it may be that he loves thee enough to chasten thee.

A child of God now says to me, "If God is so ready to pardon, how is it I am still a sufferer, I am still poor, and so on?" Ah, my dear friend, perhaps that is not a rod at all, for remember "every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it." Not because it did not bear, but to make it bring forth more fruit. You are God's child, and you have a cross to carry. Do not look at it as a token of anger. Was God angry with Simon, the Cyrenean, who carried Christ's cross after him? No, he was conferring an honour upon him.

"Shall Simon bear the cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for every one,
And there's a cross for me."

Take it up, for "through much tribulation" we shall "inherit the kingdom." Look at affliction in this light, and you will see that there is nothing of anger in it.

"But," says one child of God, "I am under a cloud. I cannot see the face of God. Why does he hide himself from me?" Not because he is unready to pardon, but, perhaps, because you are not ready to forsake the sin which he is aiming at. Perhaps you have not searched your heart yet. There is still hidden under the camel's furniture some idol or other. Make Rachel get up, and do you search even in the secret places. Cry, "Wherefore dost thou contend with me?" for, if like David and Job you have to say that you are chastened every morning and plagned every evening, there is a reason for it. If you have walked contrary to God he is walking contrary to you. Take your Achan and stone him, and then the Lord will come into the camp again. Tear down the idol and you shall have Jehovah's presence once more. But mark the word—whatever your experience may be, this is true—he delighteth in mercy, and he is a God ready to pardon. May the Holy Spirit bless this truth to your souls, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Nehemiah ix.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—907, 106 (Part II.), 101.

POSSIBLY many readers of the sermons may not be aware that Mr. Spurgeon edits a monthly magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*, price threepence. This contains interesting accounts of Christian work, and articles both of a spiritual and historical character, together with details of the various enterprises connected with the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Publishers, Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, Paternoster Buildings. Order of your booksellers the number for January. The volume for 1875 is now on sale, handsomely bound, price 5s.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE OIL OF GLADNESS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 16TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."—Psalm xlv. 7.

WE know that the anointing received by our Lord Jesus Christ was the resting of the Spirit of God upon him without measure. We are not left to any guesswork about this, for in Isaiah lxi. we are told, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me." Our Lord appropriated these very words to himself when he went into the synagogue at Nazareth and opened the book at the place wherein these words are written, and said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." The Apostle Peter also, in Acts x. 38, speaks of "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power": so that we know both on Old and New Testament authority that the anointing which rested upon the Lord Jesus Christ was the unction of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, by the "oil of gladness" which we have before us in the text is intended the Holy Spirit himself, or one of the gracious results of his sacred presence. The divine Spirit has many attributes, and his benign influences operate in divers ways, bestowing upon us benefits of various kinds, too numerous for us to attempt to catalogue them. Amongst these is his comforting and cheering influence. "The fruit of the Spirit is joy." In Acts xiii. 52 we read, "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." Wherever he comes as an anointing, whether upon the Lord or upon his people, upon the Christ or the Christians, upon the Anointed or upon those whom he anoints, in every case the ultimate result is joy and peace. On the head of our great High Priest he is joy, and this oil of gladness flows down to the skirts of his garments. To the Comforter, therefore, we ascribe "the oil of gladness."

From this great truth we learn another, namely, the perfect co-operation of the three persons of the blessed Trinity in the work of our redemption. The Father sends the Son, the Son with alacrity comes to redeem us,

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and the Spirit of God is upon him ; so that Father, Son, and Spirit have each a part in the saving work, and the one God of heaven and earth is the God of salvation. A very interesting subject is the work of the Spirit upon the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We see the Holy Ghost mysteriously operating in the formation and birth of the holy child Jesus, for by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost was he born of a woman. This work of the Holy Spirit was manifested to all believing eyes when the Lord Jesus came out of the waters of the Jordan after his baptism, and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and rested upon him. Before he was said to "wax strong in spirit," but afterwards he is described as "full of the Holy Ghost." Then was he led of the Spirit, and inspired by his divine energy, and this was shown throughout the whole of his life, for the Spirit was with him in innumerable miracles and in the demonstration and power which followed his words, so that he spoke as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. In him was abundantly fulfilled the prophecy which saith, "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord ; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord : and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears : But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." The Holy Spirit had also a peculiar interest in his resurrection, for he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." He was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." That same Spirit wrought even more fully when the Lord ascended up on high, and led captivity captive ; then, succeeding his ascension, the gifts of the cloven tongues of fire and the rushing mighty wind were witnessed by his disciples, for the Spirit of God was given abundantly to the church in connection with the ascension of the Redeemer. Oh, how sweetly doth the Spirit co-operate with Christ at this very day ; for it is he that takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us. He is the abiding witness in the church to the truth of the gospel, and the worker of all our gifts and graces. Jesus gives repentance, but the Spirit works it ; faith fixes upon Christ, but the Spirit of God first creates faith and opens the eye which looks to Jesus. The whole of this dispensation through it is the peculiar office of the Spirit of God to be revealing Christ to his people, and Christ in his people, and Christ in the midst of an ungodly and gain-saying generation, for a testimony against them. Blessed be the name of the Holy Spirit, that he is the divine anointing, and so proves his hearty assent to the great plan of redemption.

We now come, however, more closely to the text. The Spirit of God is here considered in one of his influences or operations as "the oil of gladness": we shall speak of this in the following way. First, *the Saviour's anointing with gladness* ; secondly, *the reason for the bestowal of this oil of joy upon him* ; and, thirdly, *the manner of the operation of this sacred anointing upon ourselves*.

I. Let us carefully consider THE SAVIOUR'S ANOINTING WITH GLADNESS. We are, perhaps, surprised to read of our Lord in connection

with gladness. Truly he was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet this sorrowful aspect was that which he presented to the superficial outside observer; and those who look within the veil of his flesh know well that a mystic glory shone within his soul. Did not David say of him as the King of Israel—"His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance." I fully believe that there was never on the face of the earth a man who knew so profound and true a gladness as our blessed Lord. Did he not desire that his joy might be in his people that their joy might be full? Does not benevolence beget joy, and who so kind as he? Is it not a great joy to suffer self-sacrifice for beloved ones? And who so disinterested as he? Is there not sure to be happiness in the heart where the noblest motives are paramount and the sweetest graces bear sway? And was not this pre-eminently the case with our Lord? Let us see.

The gladness of our Lord Jesus may be viewed, first, as *the gladness which he had in his work*. The Son of God delighted in the work which his Father had given him to do. This delight he declared as God, in the old eternity! "Lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God." This delight he had shown as man even before his great public anointing, for when he was yet a child he said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Evidently, even while yet a youth, he anticipated with delight the great business which he had to do for his Father, and commencing in a measure to do it amongst the doctors in the temple at Jerusalem. But the day came in which he had reached the appointed age, and he at once went forth to John to be baptised by him in Jordan, being eager to fulfil all righteousness. Then the Spirit of God came down upon him, and he was openly and visibly anointed, and you see from the moment when he began to stand before the public eye, with what alacrity he pursued his life work. We find him fasting, but he has been speaking to a woman by the well's brink, and the joy which he has felt while blessing her has made him quite forget the necessity for food, and he tells his disciples "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." He felt great gladness in that woman's joy, as she believed in him, and in the expectation of yet more numerous converts from those who were flocking from Samaria, of whom he said "Lift up now your eyes, for behold the fields are white already unto the harvest." That joy in his work made him abhor all idea of turning from its awful consummation, and led him to say to Peter's suggestion "Get thee behind me, Satan." We see it also in such expressions as this, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." We read that when the time came that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. His frequent allusions to his own decease by a shameful death, all showed that he viewed with intense satisfaction the great object after which he was reaching. Once, indeed, his joy flowed over so that others could see it, when he said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." "At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit."

Let it never be forgotten that we must not expect to see in the life of Christ great ebullitions of manifest exultation, because he was sent on purpose to bear our sicknesses, and to be "stricken of God and afflicted." His deep joy was concealed by his many griefs, even as the inner glory of the Tabernacle of old was hidden beneath coverings of badgers' skins. He was the sun under a cloud, but he was the sun still. If you have a small burden to carry, you may have an excess of strength which you can display in leaping or running, but if you have an enormous load to sustain your steady bearing of it may be an equally sure proof of your strength: so also, if your trials are light, your joyous spirits may vent themselves in smiles and songs, but if you are severely afflicted it will need all your joyfulness to keep you from sinking. Our blessed Lord had a load upon him infinitely transcending any weight of sorrow ever borne by the most burdened of his people, and it needed the wonderful joy which I feel sure we are justified in ascribing to him to balance the marvellous grief which he had to endure. The uplifting influence of this joy sufficed to bring him into a condition of calm, quiet, serene majesty of spirit. Nothing strikes you more in the Saviour than the quiet peacefulness with which he pursues the even tenor of his way. Now, if he had not possessed great stores of secret joy his spirit would have been famished for want of sustenance. You would have found him constantly sighing and weeping; his words and tones would have become a terror to those around him, and his whole appearance would have appeared melancholy and depressing to the last degree, whereas his manner was cheerful and attractive—let the little children who thronged around him bear witness to that. He was a man of sorrows, but he was not a preacher of sorrows, neither do his life or his discourses leave an unhappy impression upon the mind. The fact, probably, is, that he was both the greatest rejoicer and the greatest mourner that ever lived, and between these two there was an equilibrium of mind kept up, so that wherever you meet him, with the exception of his agony in the garden, he is peaceful and serene. You neither see him dancing like David before the ark, nor yet like David bewailing the loss of one he loved with a "Would God I had died for thee." He does not, like Elijah, run before the king's chariot, nor lie down under the juniper to die. He neither strives nor cries, nor causes his voice to be heard in the streets; his peace is like a river, and his heart abides in the Sabbath of God.

We see, then, that in his work our great High Priest was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, but we also note that those who are his fellows do in their degree partake in this oil of gladness, and are enabled to feel joy in the work which is appointed them of the Lord. While our King is anointed with the oil of gladness it is also written of the virgin souls who wait upon his church, "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought, they shall enter into the King's palace." If any professing Christian man here is engaged in a work which he does not feel glad to do, I question if he is in his right place. Occasional fits of depression there may be, but these are not because we do not love the work, but because we cannot do it so well as we would desire. We are tired in the work, but not tired of it. The

Lord loves to employ willing workmen. His army is not made up of pressed men, but of those whom grace has made volunteers. "Serve the Lord with gladness." Our Lord does not set us task work, and treat us like prisoners in gaol, or slaves under the lash. I sometimes hear our life-work called a task. Well, the expression may be tolerated, but I confess I do not like it to be applied to Christian men. It is no task to me at any rate to preach my Master's gospel, or to serve him in any way. I thank God every day that "to me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." You teachers in the school, I hope your labour of love is not a bondage to you! An unwilling teacher will soon make unwilling scholars. Yea, I know that those of you who serve the Lord find a reward in the work itself, and gladly pursue it. I am sure you will not prosper in it if it be not so. If you follow your work unwillingly, and regret that you ever undertook it, and feel encumbered by it, you will do no good. No man wins a race who has no heart in the running. In this respect the joy of the Lord is your strength, and as your Master was anointed with the oil of gladness in his work, so must you be. Yet, beloved fellow-labourer, you will never be so glad in your work as *he* was in his, nor will you ever be able to prove that gladness by such self-denials, by such agonies, and such a death. He has proved how glad he was to save sinners, because "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame." Blessed Emanuel, thou art justly anointed with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

We further note that our Lord had this oil of gladness *FROM his work*. Even while he was engaged in it he derived some joy from it, though it was but as the gleanings of the vintage compared with the after results. He did reap in joy as well as sow in tears, for many became his disciples, and over each one of these he rejoiced. It was impossible that the Good Shepherd should have saved so many sheep as he did without rejoicing when he threw them on his shoulders to bear them to the fold. Assuredly he rejoiced that he had found the sheep which he had lost. But the fulness of his joy was left till after he had ascended on high, then indeed was he anointed with the oil of gladness, and the voice was heard, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." My brethren, the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ now that he knows his beloved are securely his, and no longer the slaves of sin and heirs of wrath, is too great to be measured. He has redeemed unto himself a people in whom his soul delights. For them the price is fully paid, for them the penalty has been completely endured, for them all chains are broken, and for them the prison house is razed to its foundation: for them hath he bruised the serpent's head, for them hath he by death destroyed death, and led captive him that had the power of death, even the devil.

"All his work and warfare done,
He into his heaven is gone,
And before his Father's throne,
Now is pleading for his own."

He now continues to receive into his joy the multitudes whom the Spirit brings to him, for whom of old he shed his precious blood. You cannot conceive the gladness of Christ. If you have ever brought one soul to Christ you have had a drop of it, but his gladness lies not only in receiving them, but in actually being the author of salvation to every one of them. The Saviour looks upon the redeemed with an unspeakable delight, thinks of what they used to be, thinks of what they would have been but for his interposition, thinks of what they now are, thinks of what he means to make them in that great day when they shall rise from the dead; and as his heart is full of love to them he joys in their joy, and exults in their exultation. Their heavens swell their Mediator's heaven, and their myriad embodiments of bliss, each one reflects his own felicity, and so (speaking after the manner of men) increases it, for he lives ten thousand lives by living in them, and joys unnumbered joys in their joys. I speak with humblest fear lest in any word I should speak amiss, for he is God as well as man, but this is certain, that there is a joy of our Lord into which he will give his faithful ones to enter, a joy which he has won by passing through the shame and grief by which he has redeemed mankind. The oil of gladness is abundantly poured on that head which once was crowned with thorns.

Now, brethren, you, also, can be partakers in this joy. When he makes you in your little measure to be instrumentally saviours of others, then you also partake of his gladness; but as I have said before, you cannot know its fulness, for he is in this respect anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me." Returning from the battle and the spoil he has a joy with which none can intermeddle, for his own right hand and his holy arm hath gotten unto him the victory.

Again, our Lord Jesus has the oil of gladness poured upon him in another sense, namely, because *his person and his work are the cause of ineffable gladness in others*. Oh, I wish I had a week in which to talk upon this point—a week—one could scarcely enter upon the theme in that time! We sang just now—

"Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast."

The oil of gladness upon him is so sweet that we have only to think upon it and it fills us with delight. There is gladness in his very name.

"Exult all hearts with gladness
At sound of Jesu's name;
What other hath such sweetness,
Or such delight can claim?"

What gladness he created when here below. His birth set the skies ringing with heavenly music, and made the hearts of expectant saints to leap for joy. In after days a touch of the hem of his garment made a woman's heart glad when she felt the issue of her blood stanch'd, and a word from his lips made the tongue of the dumb to

sing. For him to lay his hand upon the sick was to raise them from their beds of sickness, and deliver them from pain and disease. His touch was gladness then, and a spiritual touch is the same now. To-day to preach of him is gladness, to sing of him is gladness, to trust him is gladness, to work for him is gladness, to have communion with him is gladness. To come to his table, and there to feast with him, is gladness; to see his image in the eyes of his saints is gladness; to see that image only as yet begun to form in the heart of a young convert is gladness. Everything about him is gladness. All his garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Nothing comes within a mile of him but what it makes you glad to think that he has been so near it. The very print of his foot has comfort in it, and the wounds in his hands are windows of hope. I have known some who have had to carry a cross for his dear sake, and they have kissed and hugged that cross, and gloried in their tribulations because they were borne for him. Fellowship with him has turned the bitterest potion into generous wine. Beloved, if these distant glimpses are so precious, what must it be to see him face to face? I have tried to conceive it, and I protest that even in attempting the conception my spirit seems to swoon at the prospect of such supreme delight. Only to hear the music of his footfall on the other side the partition wall raises longings in my heart too strong, too eager to be long endured. What, death, art thou all that divides me from seeing my Lord? I would gladly die a million deaths to see him as he is and to be like him. What, a slumber in the grave for this poor body! Is that all I have to dread? Then let it slumber, and let the worms consume it, for "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Oh, what will it be to see *him*? To see *HIM* that loved us so, to mark the wounds with which he purchased our redemption, to behold his glory, to listen to that dear voice of his, and to hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." To lie in his bosom for ever, truly neither eye hath not seen, nor ear heard the like of this bliss. More than the bride longs for the marriage day do we expect the bridal feast of heaven, but of all the dainties on that royal table there will not be one that will be equal to himself, for to see him will be all the heaven we desire. He is better than heaven's harp or angels, and the cause of greater gladness than streets of gold or walls of jasper.

Brethren, can we share this power to distribute joy? Assuredly we can. If the Lord Jesus be with us we can give joy to others. I know some whose very presence comforts their fellows; their words are so full of consolation, and their hearts so overflowing with sympathy that they make gladness wherever they go. Ay, but the best of you, ye sons of consolation, are not anointed with the oil of gladness to the same extent as he was. Above his fellows, even above Barnabas the son of consolation; above the best and the tenderest sympathizers is he thus anointed, and from him there pours forth a continual stream of effectual consolation which becomes the oil of joy to those who wear the garments of heaviness. Thus much upon the first point, the Saviour's anointing of gladness.

II. Let us now consider THE REASON FOR THE BESTOWAL OF THIS ANOINTING UPON HIM. It is given in the text. He is anointed above his fellows, because it is said of him, "*Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness.*" The perfect righteousness of Christ has brought to him this gladness, because perfect holiness there must be before there can be perfect happiness. Sin is the enemy of joy. Let the sinner say what he likes, sin can no more dwell with real joy than the lion will lie down with the lamb. To be perfectly glad you must be perfectly cleansed from sin, for until you are so cleansed you cannot possess the oil of gladness to the measure that Christ possessed it. As the believer is delivered from the power of sin he is brought into a condition in which the joy of the Lord can more and more abide in him. Now, every way Jesus loved righteousness intensely and hated wickedness intensely. He died that he might establish righteousness; and that he might destroy wickedness from off the face of the earth; therefore it is that he has greater gladness, because he had greater holiness. Moreover, you know that in any holy enterprise if the business succeeds the joy of the worker is proportionate to the trial it has cost him. In the great battle of righteousness our Lord has led the van, in the great fight against wickedness our Saviour has borne the brunt of the battle; therefore, because he to the death loved righteousness and to the agony and bloody sweat strove against sin, the accomplished conquest brings him the greatest joy. He has done the most for the good cause, and therefore he is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

Now, note there is another reason why he is anointed, and there is another view of the anointing. He is anointed above his fellows, which shows that those who are in fellowship with him are anointed too. You observed in our reading that the high priest had the oil poured on his head, but the sons of Aaron who were minor priests were sprinkled with this same oil mixed with the blood of the sacrifice. On Christ this anointing is poured above his fellows, and then upon his fellows in communion with himself there comes the sprinkling of the oil. We have our measure; he has it without measure. Now, beloved, Christ is anointed above his fellows that his fellows may be anointed with him. Even as he ascended above all things that he might fill all things, so is he anointed above his fellows that he may anoint his fellows; and through the power of the anointing we are told that his people come into the same condition of righteousness as himself. Turn to Isaiah lxi., which passage we have already had before us, and you find as follows—"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that"—mark this!—"that they might be called trees of righteousness." Now, observe, that we first read, "Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness, therefore God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness," and then we meet with the parallel with reference to ourselves, "The oil of joy for mourning, that they may be called trees of righteousness." He is anointed because he is righteous; we are anointed that we may be righteous, and thus in Christ we come into the condition in which it is safe for us to be glad, and possible for joy to dwell in us. To the

unrighteous the oil of gladness cannot come, but to the righteous there ariseth light even in darkness. "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked." The holy oil was forbidden to be placed upon a stranger to God's holy house; and upon man's flesh it could not be poured, because man's flesh is a corrupt, polluted thing. This oil of gladness comes only on those who are born into God's Israel by regeneration, and are delivered from walking after the flesh; these the Lord makes to be as "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified." See then the two reasons why Christ has received the anointing, first because he is righteous himself; and secondly, that he may make others righteous. Therefore is the Spirit of the Lord God upon him that he may give the oil of joy to his own chosen, and make them righteous, even as he is righteous, glad as he is glad.

III. We will now meditate upon THE MANNER OF THE OPERATION OF THIS OIL OF GLADNESS UPON US. Jesus is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Now, we have to show that his fellows are anointed with the oil of gladness too. Did not David say, "Thou anointest mine head with oil; my cup runneth over"? so that we can say of ourselves what we say of our Lord, we are anointed, for he was anointed. Now, in what respects does the anointing of the Holy Spirit give us gladness? I shall notice eight things, and touch but very briefly on each.

First, we too, through Jesus Christ, are *anointed to an office*, "for he hath made us"—whisper it to one another in the joy of delight—"He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign for ever and ever." When the oil went on Aaron's head, you know how it ran down his beard, even Aaron's beard, unto the skirts of his garments, and now this day this anointing oil, which made the king and the priest, has fallen upon us too. Blessed be his name, shall we not be glad? It is very inconsistent with our position if we are not. Are you a king and do you not rejoice?

"Why should the children of our King
Go mourning all their days?
Sweet Comforter, descend and bring
Some unction of thy grace."

May the gladness now come to you. You are priests to God. Shall the anointed priests serve their Lord with gloomy countenances? No: rejoice in the Lord always, all ye priests of his that are anointed to this blessed work. "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron."

We, too, are *consecrated to the Lord*, for the oil poured upon the priest was the oil of consecration. From that time forward he was a dedicated man; he could not serve anyone but God; he, above all the rest of the congregation, was the man of God for ever as long as ever he lived. So beloved, we have been consecrated: the Spirit of God has sanctified us and set us apart unto the Lord, as it is written, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." Our Lord said in his matchless prayer, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "Sanctify them," said he, "by thy truth, thy word is truth." Yes, blessed be God, we are consecrated men and women: we

belong to the Lord, and are vessels for the Master's use, hallowed from all other uses to be the Lord's. "For I will be to them a God, they shall be to me a people." Does not this make you glad? Are you really set apart to be the Lord's own sons and daughters, and hallowed to be used by him in his service both here and hereafter, and do you not rejoice? O my soul, dost thou not feel the trickling of the consecrating oil adown thy brow even now, and does it not make thy face to shine and make thy heart happy, because thou art now the Lord's?

Thirdly, by this oil we are also *qualified for our office*. You see the Spirit descended upon Christ that he might have the spirit of wisdom, and power, and so be strengthened and qualified to discharge his sacred work. Now, the Spirit of God is upon every believer in this sense. Remember how in his First Epistle, second chapter, and twentieth verse, John says, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things," or "ye are able to discern all things." And further on, in that same chapter, he says, "This anointing teacheth you all things." Well, if we are to serve the Lord a main gift is knowledge, for how can we instruct the ignorant, or guide the perplexed, except we know ourselves? And it is this anointing which teaches us, and makes us fit for the service to which the Master has called us. Oh, does the Holy Spirit then lead us into all truth, and give us knowledge, and shall we not rejoice? Ignorance means sorrow, but the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ means joy. O brethren, will ye not bless God to-day for what the Spirit of God has taught you? If you do not, what must you be made of? for he has taught you such wonderful lessons so full of joy. Even if he has never taught you more than this, that whereas you were once blind now you see, he has taught you enough to make your heart rejoice as long as you live. Is he not the oil of gladness?

Fourthly, the Spirit of God *heals us of our diseases*. The Eastern mode of medicine was generally the application of oil, and I should not wonder if in the course of years it should be discovered that the modern pharmacy, with all its drugs, is not worth so much as the old-fashioned method. Certainly, when the Holy Spirit spake concerning sick men, and advised that medicines should be used, and prayer for their restoration, he prescribed anointing with oil. I suppose that anointing with oil was mentioned because it was the current medicine of the times, but it could not have been injurious or altogether absurd, or the Holy Spirit would not in any measure have sanctioned it. I will not raise the question, however. But a frequent medicine of the olden time was, undoubtedly, anointing with oil, and it is well known that olive oil does possess very remarkable healing qualities. I have read in books of one or two instances of the bites of serpents having the venom effectually removed by the use of olive oil. It is more commonly used in countries where it grows than here, and it is in many ways a very useful medicine. Certainly the Holy Spirit is that to us. What wounds and bruises have been healed with this oil. Before the Spirit came they were putrefying, they had not been bound up nor mollified with ointment, but now this ointment, mixed after the art of the apothecary, with the costliest spices, has effectually healed us, and what remains of the old sores and wounds it continues still to heal; and so wonderful is its power it will ultimately take out every scar,

and we shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing through its healing power. Shall we not, therefore, be glad and rejoice in the Lord, for if restoration to health makes us happy surely the renewal of our spiritual youth should make our hearts bound for joy?

Thus also we are *supplied and softened*. Oil applied to the body supple and softens, and, believe me, brethren, nothing is more akin to joy than softness and tenderness of heart. If ever you meet with a hard-hearted proud man, he is not a happy man and if he should seem to be happy in his pride it is a dangerous and deadly happiness, and the sooner it is taken away the better. Where God dwells is heaven, and where does he dwell? With the humble and the contrite heart. That is a beautiful expression of David's, I have drank joy out of it, "Make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." Oh, there is never a bone in manhood's system that knows how to rejoice till God has broken it, and when it is broken then comes the mighty Physician and applies the oil and restores the bone to infinitely more than its former strength, and then the bones which had been broken become each one so many new arguments for gratitude, and all our healed wounds become months of praise unto the Most High. We are thus softened and gladdened.

By the oil of the Holy Spirit we are also *strengthened*. Oil well rubbed into the system was anciently assumed to be a great strengthener, and I suppose it was. Certainly the Holy Spirit is the strength of Christians, and where he is the strength there is sure to be joy. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

Oil, too, is a *beautifier*. The Easterns did not think themselves fit for their banquets till they had washed their face and anointed themselves with perfumed oil. They were very fond of locks dripping with oil and faces bright therewith. Certainly there is a beauty which the Spirit gives to men, which they can never obtain in any other way. Oh, the excellence of the character that is formed by the hand of the Spirit of God! It is a beautiful thing which even God himself delights to look upon; it is a thing of beauty, and in the most emphatic sense a joy for ever. He that is made comely with the comeliness which the Holy Spirit gives must be a happy man. Other beauty may bring sorrow, but the beauty of holiness makes us akin to angels.

Once more, it becomes a *perfume*. When oil was poured on a man his presence scented the air around him, and when the Spirit of God is given to us it is perceived by other spiritual minds. Cannot you detect in a brother's prayer that he has been with Jesus? Do you not know by the lives of some of Christ's dear saints that he is very familiar with them? Do you not perceive that they have had a special anointing? The ungodly world cannot tell it, but saints discern it. The nostril of the wicked is only pleased by the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions of Egypt, but the believing nostril has been sanctified, and it perceives the delicate myrrh and cinnamon, and sweet calamus and cassia, which make up the anointing oil. The rare combination of sacred qualities which make up a holy character will be seen in the believer in whom the Holy Spirit displays his power, and as a consequence he will be glad at heart.

Furthermore, I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot

hear them now, for the time is spent. Therefore I will only say, I pray, brethren, that the anointing may be ours in all the various senses I have mentioned. I should like all of you to go away happy. You children of God, be as glad as ever you can be. I would to God that a sacred gladness rang through this house like a marriage peal: yet for all that, do not forget that Jesus has joy above you all. You may be very glad, but *he* is gladder still. You may sing his praises, but he leads the sacred orchestra of heaven. "In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee," saith he. Rejoice in his joy. I have often thought it did not matter any more what became of me so long as *he* is victorious. A soldier in battle, sorely wounded, lies bleeding in a ditch, but he hears the sound of the trumpets, and they tell him the commander is coming along, the King for whom his loyal heart is willing to bleed, and he enquires, "Have they won the day?" "Oh, yes," they say, "he has won the day, and the enemy are flying before him." The soldier exclaims, "Thank God, I can die." It is the soldier's joy to die with victory ringing in his ears. Our Lord is glad, and therefore we are glad.

"Let him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed his head to death,
And be his honour sounded high
By all things that have breath."

If it be so we will be content to say, like David, "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." We have no more to pray for; we have done with the world, done with wishing, done with everything if Christ reigns, and all things are under his foot. May this joy be yours. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Exodus xxx. 22—33; xix. 5—7, 21; Psalm xlv. 1—8; Isaiah lxi. 1—3.

The reader is earnestly requested to read these passages.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—Psalm xlv. (Vers. I.),
438, 786.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."—Job. xxxiv. 31, 32.

EVEN when addressing our fellow-men there should be a fitness about our speech; therefore Solomon represents the preacher as seeking out acceptable words, or words meet for the occasion. When we approach those who are high in authority this necessity becomes conspicuous, and therefore men who are petitioners in the courts of princes are very careful to order their language aright. Much more, then, when we speak before the Lord ought we to consider, as the text does, the meetness of our words. Some language must never be uttered in the divine presence, and even that which is allowed must be well weighed, and set forth with solemn humbleness. Hence Elihu does well to suggest in the text language that is "meet to be said unto God." May our lips ever be kept as by a watchful sentinel, lest they suffer anything to pass through them dishonourable to the Most High. In the divine presence—and we are always there—it is incumbent upon us to set a double watch over every word that comes from our mouth.

Remember that thought is speech before God. Thought is not speech to man, for men cannot read one another's thoughts until they are set forth by words or other outward signs, but God who reads the heart regards that as being speech which was never spoken, and he hears us say in our souls many things which were never uttered by our tongues. Beloved, there are thoughts which are not meet to be thought before the Lord; and it is well for us, especially those of us who are afflicted, to be very watchful over those thoughts, lest the Lord hear us say in our hearts things which will grieve his Spirit, and provoke him to jealousy. O saints of God, since you never think except in the immediate presence of your heavenly Father, make a conscience of your every thought, lest you sin in the secret chambers of your being, and charge God foolishly. Elihu tells us what it would be proper for us

to think and say, "It is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

We will use the text mainly at this time *in reference to those who are being chastened*; and afterwards we shall see if there is not teaching in it, even *to those who, at present, are not smarting under the rod*. Thirdly, *we shall find a word in our text to those who are not the children of God, and, therefore, know nothing of the smarting rod of fatherly correction*. Perhaps to them, also, God may speak through this text. O that his Holy Spirit may deign to do so.

I. But first, dear friends, let us commune together upon the text in its more natural application as addressed to THE AFFLICTED. The instruction of the wise man is for them especially; and there are three duties here prescribed for them, or rather three privileges suggested, which they should pray the Holy Spirit to enable them to enjoy.

The first lesson is, *it is meet for them to accept the affliction which the Lord sends*, and to say unto God, "I have borne chastisement." We notice that the word "chastisement" is not actually in the Hebrew, though the Hebrew could not be well interpreted without supplying the word. It might exactly and literally be translated "I bear," or "I have borne." It is the softened heart saying to God, "I bear whatever thou wilt put upon me; I have borne it, I still bear it, and I will bear it, whatever thou mayest ordain it to be. I submit myself entirely to thee, and accept the load with which thou art pleased to weight me." Now, we ought to do this, dear friends, and we shall do it if we are right at heart. We should cheerfully submit, because no affliction from which we suffer has come to us by chance. We are not left to the misery of believing that things happen of themselves, and are independent of a divinely controlling power. We know that not a drop of bitter ever falls into our cup unless the wisdom of our heavenly Father has placed it there. We are not even left in a world governed by angels, or ruled by cherubim; we dwell where everything is ordered by God himself. Shall we rebel against the Most High? Shall we not let him do as seemeth good in his sight? Shall we not cover our lip in silence when we know that the evil is of the Lord? Shame upon us, if we be his children, if this be not the prevalent spirit of our mind—"It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Moreover, we should not only bear all things because the Lord ordains them, but because he orders all things for a wise, kind, beneficent purpose. He doth not afflict willingly. He takes no delight in the sufferings of his children. Whenever adversity must come it is always with a purpose; and, if a purpose of God is to be subserved by my suffering, would I wish to escape from it? If his glory will come of it, shall I not even crave the honour of being the agent of his glory, even though it be by lying passive and enduring in anguish. Yes, beloved, since we know that God can only grieve his regenerated creatures for some purpose of love, we should willingly accept whatever sorrow he pleases to put upon us. And we have his assurance, besides, that all things work together for our good. Our trials are not merely sent with a good object, but with an object good towards ourselves, a design which is being answered

by every twig of our heavenly Father's rod. "The cup which our Father hath given us, shall we not drink it?" It is healing medicine and not deadly poison, therefore let us put it to our lips without a murmur, ay, quaff it to its very dregs, and say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

A constant submission to the divine will should be the very atmosphere in which a Christian lives. He should put an earnest negative upon his self-will by crying, "*Not my will,*" and then he should with holy warmth beseech the Lord to execute his purpose, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." He should throw the whole vigour of his soul into the Lord's will, and exhibit more than submission, namely, a devout acquiescence in whatever the Lord appoints.

Beloved friends, we must not be content with bearing what the Lord sends, with the coolness which says, "It must be, and, therefore, I *must* put up with it." Such forced submission is far below a Christian grace, for many a heathen has attained it. The stolid stoic accepted what predestination handed out to him, and the Mahometan still does the same. We must go beyond unfeeling submission. We must not so harden our hearts against affliction as not to be affected by it. That chastisement which does not make us smart has failed of its end. It is by the blueness of the wound, says Solomon, that the heart is made better; and if there is no real blueness—if it be merely a surface bruise—little good will come of it. "For a season we are in heaviness," says the apostle, "through manifold trials," and not only the trial, but the heaviness which comes of it, is needful to us. God would not have his children become like the ox or the ass, which present hard skins to hard blows, but he would have us tender and sensitive. There is such a thing as despising the chastening of the Lord, by a defiant attitude which seems to challenge the Lord to draw a tear or fetch a sigh from us. Against this let us be on our guard.

Neither, on the other hand, are we to receive affliction with a rebellious spirit. It is hard for us to kick against the pricks, like the ox which, when goaded, is irritated, and strikes out and drives the iron into itself deeper than it went before. We can easily do this by complaining that God is too severe with us. In this spirit we may "take arms against a sea of troubles;" but by opposing we shall not end them, but increase their raging. By a proud murmuring spirit we only bring upon ourselves trial upon trial; "the Lord resisteth the proud," and a high spirit challenges his opposition.

Neither, dear friends, as believers in God, are we to despair under trouble, for that is not bearing the cross, but lying down under it. We are to take up our appointed burden, and carry it, and not sit down in wicked sullenness, and murmur that we can do no more. Some are in a very naughty frame of mind, their moody spirits mutter that if God will be so severe with them they must yield to it, but they have lost all heart, and all faith, and all they ask for is leave to die. A child of God must not repine. He has not yet "resisted unto blood, striving against sin"; and, if he had, still he should say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." Since Jesus, the man of sorrows, never murmured, it ill becomes any of his followers to do so. We must in patience possess our souls. Perhaps you think it easier for me to

say this than it would be to practise it; and yet, by Almighty grace, a saint can bear to the utmost of bearing, to the utmost of suffering he can suffer, to the utmost of loss he can lose, and even to the uttermost of death itself he can die daily, and yet triumph through the divine life, for God, that worketh in us to will and to do, is almighty, and makes our weakness strong.

The Christian, then, is not to treat the cross which God puts upon him in any such way as I have described, but he is to accept it *humbly*, looking up to God, and saying, "Much worse than this I might reckon to receive even as thy child; for the discipline of thine house requireth the rod, and well might I expect to be chastened every morning." The child of God should feel that it is in very faithfulness that the Lord afflicts him, and that every stroke has love in it. Anything over and above the lowest abyss of hell is a great mercy to us. If we had to lie ill for fifty years and scarcely have a minute free from pain, yet since the Lord has pardoned our sins, and accepted us in Christ Jesus, and made us his children, we should be grateful for every pang, and still continue to bless the Lord upon our beds, and sing his high praises in the midst of the fires. Humbly, therefore, as sinners deserving divine wrath, we are bound to accept the chastenings of the Lord.

We should receive chastisement *with meek submission*, presenting ourselves to God that he may do with us still as he has dealt with us—not wishing to start aside to the right hand or to the left: asking him, if it may be his will to remove the load, to heal the pain, to deliver us from the bereavement, and the like, but still always leaving ample margin for full resignation of spirit. The gold is not to rebel against the goldsmith, but should at once yield to be placed in the crucible and thrust into the fire. The wheat as it lies upon the threshing-floor is not to have a will of its own, but to be willing to endure the strokes of the flail that the chaff may be separated from the precious corn. We are not far off being purged from dross and cleansed from chaff when we are perfectly willing to undergo any process which the divine wisdom may appoint us. Self and sin are married, and will never be divorced, and till our self-hood is crushed the seed of sin will still have abundant vitality in it; but when it is "not I" but "Christ that liveth in me," then have we come near to that mark to which God has called us, and to which, by his Spirit, he is leading us.

But we ought to go farther than this. We should accept chastisement *cheerfully*. It is a hard lesson, but a lesson which the Comforter is able to teach us—to be glad that God should have his way. Do you know what it is sometimes to be very pleased to do what you do not like to do? I mean you would not have liked to do it, but you find that it pleases some one you love, and straightway the irksome task becomes a pleasure. Have you not felt, sometimes, when one whom you very much esteem is sick and ill, that you would be glad enough to bear the pain, at least for a day or two, that you might give the suffering one a little rest? Would you not find a pleasure in being an invalid for a while to let your beloved one enjoy a season of health? Let the same motive, in a higher degree, sway your spirit! Try to feel, "If it pleases God it pleases me. If, Lord, it is *thy* will, it shall be *my*

will. Let the lashes of the scourge be multiplied, if so thou shalt be the more honoured, and I shall be permitted to bring thee some degree of glory." The cross becomes sweet when our heart is so sweetened by the Spirit that our will runs parallel with the will of God. We should learn to say, in the language of Elihu "I have borne, I do bear, I accept it all." To be as plastic clay on the potter's wheel, or as wax in the modeller's hand, should be our great desire. That is the first business of the sufferer.

The next duty is to forsake the sin which may have occasioned the chastisement. "It is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement; I will not offend any more." There is a connection between sin and suffering in every case. It would be very wrong for us to suppose that every man who suffers is therefore more guilty than others: that was the mistake of Job's friends—a mistake too commonly made every day: but it is right for the sufferer himself to judge his own case, by a standard which *we* may not use toward him. He should say, "Is there not some connection between this chastisement and sin that dwelleth in me?" And here he must not judge himself unrighteously, even for God, lest he plunge himself into unnecessary sorrow. There are afflictions which come from God, not on account of past sin, but to prevent sin in the future. There are also sharp prunings which are intended to make us bring forth more fruit: they are not sent because we have brought forth no fruit, but because we are fruitful boughs, and are worth pruning. "Every branch in me that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." There are also afflictions which are sent by way of test, and trial, and proof, both for God's glory and for the manifestation of his power; as also for the comforting of others, that trembling saints may see how weak and feeble men can carry the heaviest cross for Christ's sake, and can triumph under it. We are not to be sure that every sorrow comes to us because of any sin actually committed; yet it will be best for us to be more severe with ourselves than we should think of being with others, and always to ask, "Is there not some cause for this chastisement? May there not be something of which God would rid me, or something which has grieved *him* which has caused him to grieve *me*?" Brothers and sisters, I charge you never be lenient with yourselves. The best of us are men at the best, and at our best we have much to mourn over in the presence of the Most High. It is good to be always dissatisfied with ourselves, and pressing forward to a something yet beyond; always praying that in us Christ's likeness may be completely formed. Thorns are often put in the nest that we may search for hidden evils. "Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee?" Has there been a defeat at Ai? May there not be an Achan in the camp? Has not a traitor concealed in some secret place a goodly Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold? Does not trial give a hint that there may be something amiss? Beloved, I ask myself and I ask you to look now, not only to your outward character, but to your more private life and to your walk before God, and see if there be not some flaw. Is there trouble in the family? Have you always acted towards the children and the servants as you should have done as a master and a father? Question yourself. The child

is grieving you. Have you, good mother, always been as prayerful about that child as you should have been? May not your child's conduct to you be a fair reflection of your own conduct towards your heavenly Father? I do not mention any of these things to increase your grief, but in order that you may put your finger on the evil which provokes the Lord God, and may put it away. Have there been losses in business? Are you sure, brother, that when you were making money you always used it for God as you should? Were you a good steward? Did you give the Lord his full portion—the sacred tithe of all that you had? Or may you not have been too selfish—and may not that be the cause why you must now be reduced from wealth to comparative poverty? Is that so? Does the affliction scourge your body? Then has there been anything wrong with your habits? Has the flesh predominated over the spirit? Has there been a failure of the entire consecration of the vessel unto the Lord? Does the trial occur in the person of some dear one? You may not be conscious of any wrong there, but still look, dear friends! Search the whole of your conduct as the spies searched Canaan of old. If your sin be glaring, there is little need of a chastisement to point it out to you, for you ought to see it without that: but there may be a secret sin between you and your Lord for which he has sent you chastisement, and after this you must raise a hue and cry. You know I do not mean that the Lord is punishing you for sin as a judge punishes a criminal, for he will not do that; since he has laid the punishment of sin upon Christ, and Christ has borne it as a matter of punitive justice. He, as a father, chasteneth his child, but never without a cause: I am urging you to see whether there may not be some cause for the present painful discipline. Never fall into the mistake of some who suppose that sin in God's children is a trifle. Why, if there is any place where sin is horrible it is in a child of God. Hence the text puts it, "I will not *offend* any more." Sin is an offensive thing to God, he cannot bear it. I should dislike a plague spot on anybody's face, but I should tremble to see it most of all upon my own child's face. Sin is more visible in a good man than in any other. I may drop a spot of ink upon a black handkerchief and never see it, but on a white one you will perceive it directly, and see it the more because of the whiteness of the linen which it defiles. You, child of God, know that just in proportion as you are sanctified—in proportion as you live near to God—sin will be grievous to the Most High. It is gloriously terrible to live near to God. I wonder if you understand me, all of you. To walk as a favoured courtier with a monarch is a very delicate matter. Favourites have to pick their steps; for though they stand near a king, they well know how soon they may fall from their high position. We serve a jealous God. That is a wonderful question, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" God is that consuming fire. God is the everlasting burnings. Who among us shall dwell with him? The answer is, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, he shall dwell on high. His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks": but it is only the man who is very jealous of himself who will be able to bear that fierce light which beats the throne of God—that devouring flame which God himself

is, as saith the apostle—"Even our God is a consuming fire." Cæsar's wife must not only be without fault, but she must be above suspicion, and such must be the character of the child of God who, like Moses, lives in the inner circle—who stands on the mountain top—who knows what the peaks of Sinai mean, and what it is to be forty days in fellowship with the Most High.

Beloved friends, I urge upon you a very close search into what the transgression may be which has brought correction upon you, for it may be in you an offence which would scarcely be sin in anybody else. Another person might fall into your fault as a sin of ignorance, but since you know better the sin is all the blacker in you. The Lord will be sanctified in them that draw near unto him, and woe to them if they defile themselves.

The third lesson in the text to the afflicted clearly teaches them that *it is their duty and privilege to ask for more light*. The text says, "That which I see not teach thou me. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more." Do you see the drift of this? It is the child of God awakened to look after the sin which the chastisement indicates; and since he cannot see all the evil that may be in himself, he turns to his God with this prayer, "What I see not teach thou me."

Beloved friends, it may be that, in looking over your past life and searching through your heart, you do not see your sin, for perhaps it is where you do not suspect. You have been looking in another quarter. Your own opinion is that you are weak in one point, but possibly you are far weaker in the opposite direction. In nothing do men make more mistakes than concerning their own characters. I have known a brother confess that he was deficient in firmness, when, in my opinion, he was about as obstinate as any man I knew. Another man has said that he was always wanting in coolness, and yet I thought that if I needed to fill an ice-well, I had only to put him into it. Persons misjudge themselves. Unfeeling people say they are too sensitive, and selfish persons imagine themselves to be victims to the good of others. So, it may be, you have been looking in one quarter for the sin, while your fault lies in the opposite point of the compass. Pray, then, "Lord, search me and try me, and that which I see not teach thou me." Remember, brethren, that our worst sins may lurk under our holiest things. Oh, how these evils will hide away—not under the docks and nettles of the dunghheap—not they, but under the lilies and the roses of the garden. In the cups of the flowers they lurk. They do not fit through our souls like devils with dragons' wings; they fly as angels of light, with wings tinted as the rainbow. They come as sheep, and a very fat sort they seem to be, but they are wolves in sheep's clothing. Watch, therefore, very carefully against the sins of your holy things. In our holy things we are nearer to God than at any other time, and hence such defilement soonest brings upon us the stroke of our heavenly Father's rod. Perhaps your sin is hidden away under something very dear to you. Jacob made a great search for the images—the teraphs which Laban worshipped. He could not find them. No; he did not like to disturb Rachel, and Laban did not like to disturb her either—a favourite wife and daughter must not be inconvenienced. She may sit still on the

camel's furniture, but she hides the images there. Even thus you do not like to search in a certain quarter of your nature; it is a very tender subject—something you feel very grieved about when anybody even hints at it: it is just there that the sin is harboured. My brethren and sisters, let us be honest with the Lord. Let us really wish to know where we are wrong, and heartily long to be set right. Do you think we all honestly want to know our errors? Are there not chapters of the Bible which we do not like to read? If there are—if any text has a quarrel with you, quarrel with yourself; but yield wholly to the word of God. Is there any doctrine which you almost think is a truth, but your friends do not believe it, and they might, perhaps, think you heretical if you were to accept it, and therefore you dare not investigate any further? Oh, dear friends, let us be rid of all such dishonesty. So much of it has got into the church that many will not see things that are plain as a pikestaff. They will not see, for truth might cost them too dear. They cover up and hide away some parts of Scripture which it might be awkward for them to understand, because of their connection with a church, or their standing in a certain circle. This is hateful, and we need not wonder if God smites the man who allows himself in it. Be true, brother! You cannot deceive God. Do not try it. Ask him to search you through and through. Let your desire be, "Refining fire go through my heart with a mighty flame that shall devour everything like a lie, everything that is unholy, selfish, earthly, that I may be fully consecrated unto the Lord my God." This is the right way in which to treat our chastisements. "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more. That which I see not, teach thou me."

"Alas," says somebody, "we cannot say that we will do no more iniquity." Yes, we can *say* it a great deal more easily than we can practise it, and therefore it is a pity to say it except in the evangelical spirit, leaning entirely on the divine strength. He who says, "I will do no more iniquity" has there and then perpetrated iniquity if he has vowed in his own strength, for he has exalted himself into the place of God by self-confidence. Yet we must feel in our inmost hearts that we desire to depart from all iniquities. There must be an earnest and hearty intent that, as Paul shook off the viper into the fire, so will we, as God helps us, shake off the sin, whatever it may be, which brings us the trial, or that causes the Lord to take away the light of his countenance from us. Oh, how earnestly would I urge my dear tried brothers and sisters to seek after this excellent fruit of affliction. May it come to every one of us according as the affliction comes, that we may never miss the sweet fruit of this bitter tree. God bless you who are tried, and support you under your griefs; but, above all, may he sanctify you through tribulation, for that is the main point, and it little matters how sharp the flames if you are purified by the fire.

II. And now, briefly, I am going to use the text for THOSE OF US WHO MAY NOT HAVE BEEN AFFLICTED. What does the text say to us if we are not afflicted? Does it not say this—"If the afflicted man is to say 'I hear,' and to take up his yoke cheerfully, *how cheerfully ought you and I to take up the daily yoke of our Christian labour*?" Brother, sister, do you ever grow weary? Does the Sunday-school tax you

too much? Is that Bible-class becoming somewhat a heaviness? That house-to-house visitation—has it become a drudgery? That distribution of tracts—is there a great sameness and tedium about it? Now look, my brother, look at yonder dear saint of God who has been for months upon his bed till the feathers have grown hard beneath him. He shifts from side to side but finds no ease—no sleep at night, no respite by day. Would you like to change places with him? Yet hear how he praises God amidst his many pains, and abundant weaknesses, and poverty. Do you prefer your lot to his? Well, then, in the name of everything that is good, accept your portion with joy, and throw your soul into the Lord's service. The great Captain might say to you, "What! tired of marching! I will send you back to the trenches, and let you lie there till you feel sick at heart of your inactivity. What! weary of fighting! You shall be put into the hospital with broken bones and made to lie there and pine, and see what you think of enforced inactivity." If I have any message to give from my own bed of sickness it would be this—if you do not wish to be full of regrets when you are obliged to lie still, work while you can. If you desire to make a sick bed as soft as it can be, do not stuff it with the mournful reflection that you wasted time while you were in health and strength. People said to me years ago, "You will break your constitution down with preaching ten times a week," and the like. Well, if I have done so, I am glad of it. I would do the same again. If I had fifty constitutions I would rejoice to break them down in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. You young men that are strong, overcome the wicked one and fight for the Lord while you can. You will never regret having done all that lies in you for our blessed Lord and Master. Crowd as much as you can into every day, and postpone no work till to-morrow. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

We have yet another remark for those that are strong. *Should not the favours of God lead us to search out our sins?* Chastisement acts like a black finger to point out our failures: ought not the love of God to do the same with its hand glittering with jewels? Lord, dost thou give me good health? Lord, dost thou spare my wife and my children to me? Dost thou give me of substance enough and to spare? Then, Lord, is there anything about me that might grieve thee? Do I harbour anything in my soul that might vex thy Spirit? Let thy love guide me that I may escape from these evils. It is a sweet text—"I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." Your child only needs a glance of the eye, and he runs to you; but your horse and mule will not do that, you must put a bit into their mouths, and some of them must have very hard bits, and their mouths must be made very tender before they can be guided. You are men, do not be as the beasts are. Yet some of God's own children are very brutish. They will not obey his words, and so their God has to give them blows, for he will have his children obey him: if they will be drawn with cords of love so they shall be, but if they will not, they shall be driven with the rod. If you make yourselves horses and mules he will treat you like horses

and mules, or you will have reason to think so ; perhaps the best way to prevent you becoming altogether mulish is to treat you as if you were a mule, and so drive you out of it, by letting you see the effect of your folly. Let our mercies act as a sweet medicine, and then we shall not need bitter potions.

Once again. Do you not think that while enjoying God's mercy we should be anxious to be searched by the light of the love of God? Should we not wish to use the light of the divine countenance that we may discover all our sin and overcome it. I know some Christians who will not come to this point. They have an ugly temper, and they say, "Well, you know, that is constitutional." Away for ever with such wicked self-excusing. It is idle to say, "I cannot help it, it is my temperament." Your temperament will destroy you, as surely as you live, if the grace of God does not destroy your temperament. If such excuses were permitted there is no crime, however abominable, for which temperament might not be pleaded. Thieves, harlots, drunkards, murderers might all set up this justification, for they all have their evil temperaments. Do you find in the law that any sin is excused upon the ground that it is "constitutional?" Do you find anything in the example of Christ, or in the precepts of the gospel, to justify a man in saying, "I must be treated with indulgence, for my nature is so inclined to a certain sin that I cannot help yielding to it?" My brother, you must not talk such nonsense. Your first business is to conquer the sin you love best ; against it all your efforts, and all the grace you can get must be levelled. Jericho must be first besieged, for it is the strongest fort of the enemy, and until it is taken nothing can be done. I have generally noticed in conversion that the most complete change takes place in that very point in which the man was constitutionally most weak. God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. "Well," cries one, "suppose I have a besetting sin, how can I help it?" I reply, if I knew that four fellows were going to beset me to-night on Clapham Common, I should take with me sufficient policemen to lock the fellows up. When a man knows that he has a besetting sin it is not for him to say, "It is a besetting sin and I cannot help it ;" he must, on the other hand, call for heavenly assistance against these besetments. If you have besetting sins, and you know it, fight with them, and overcome them by the blood of the Lamb. By faith in Jesus Christ, besetting sins go to be led captive, and they must be led captive, for the child of God must overcome even to the end. He is to be more than conqueror through him that has loved him. Let the love of God, then, lead you to search yourselves and say, "That which I see not teach thou me. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

III. The last remark I have to make is to THE UNCONVERTED. Perhaps there are some here who are not the people of God, and yet they are very happy and prosperous. They have all that heart can wish, and as they hear me talk about God's children being chastened, they say, "I do not want to be one of them, if such is their portion." You would rather be what you are, would you? "Yes," say you. Harken! We will suppose that we have before us a prince of the blood who will one day be a king. He has been doing something

wrong, and his father has chastened him with the rod. There stands the young prince with the tears running down his cheeks; and over yonder is a street arab, who has no father that he knows of—certainly none that ever chastened him for his good. He may do what he likes—use any sort of language—steal, lie, swear, if he likes, and no one will chasten him. He stands on his head, or makes wheels in the streets, or rolls in the dirt, but no father ever holds a rod over him. He sees this little prince crying, and he laughs at him, “You don’t have the liberty I do. You are not allowed to stand on your head as I do. Your father wouldn’t let you beg for coppers by the side of the omnibuses as I do. You don’t sleep under an arch all night as I do. I would not be you to catch that thrashing! I would sooner be a street-boy than a prince!” Your little prince very soon wipes his eyes, and answers, “Go along with you. Why, I would rather be chastened every day and be a prince and heir to a kingdom, than I would be you with all your fine liberty!” He looks down upon the ragged urchin with the greatest conceivable pity, even though he himself is smarting from the rod. Now, sinners, that is just what we think of you and your freedom from heavenly discipline. When you are merriest and happiest, and fullest of your joy, we would not be you for the world; when you have been electrified by that splendid spectacle at the theatre, or have enjoyed yourself so much in a licentious dance, or, perhaps, in something worse, we would not be as you are. Take us at our worst—when we are most sick, most desponding, most tried, most penitent before God, we would not exchange with you at your best. Would we change with you, for all your mirth and sinful hilarity? No, *that* we would not! Ask the old woman in the winter time, who has only a couple of sticks to make a fire with, and has nothing to live upon but what the tender mercy of the parish allows her, ask her if she would change with Dives in his purple and fine linen. Look at her. She puts on an old red cloak to shelter her poor limbs, which are as full of rheumatism as they can be; the cupboard is bare, her poor husband lies in the churchyard, and she has not a child to come and see her. Ah, there she is. You say, “She is a miserable object.” Here is the young squire in his top-boots, coming home from the hunt. He is standing in front of her. He might say to her, with all his large possessions and broad acres, “You would change with me, mother, would you not?” She knows his character, and she knows that he has no love to God, and no union to Christ, and therefore she replies, “Change with you? no, that I would not, for a thousand worlds.”

“Go you that boast of all your stores,
And tell how bright they shine;
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
But my Redeemer’s mine.”

I have yet another word for you that fear not God. I wish you would reflect for a moment what will become of you one of these days. God loves his dear children very much: he loves them so much that Jesus died to save them, and yet he does not spare them when they sin, but he chastens them with the rod of men. Now, if he does so with his

children, what will he do with you who are his enemies? If judgment begins at the house of God—if when his anger does but gently smoke it is so hot—what will it be when the winds of justice fan it to a furious flame? As when the fire sets the forests of the mountains burning, or as when the vast prairie becomes one sheet of fire, so shall it be in that dread day when God shall launch out all his vengeance against the sins of the ungodly. I beseech you, think of this. He spared not his own Son, but put him to a cruel death upon the tree for the sins of others: will he spare his enemies, think you, who have rebelled against him, and rejected his mercy, when he visits them for their own personal sins? “Beware, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.”

One only thought, for I must not send you away with that terrible warning and no gospel encouragement. Learn a lesson from the Lord's children. When his children are chastened they submit, and when they submit they obtain peace. Sinner, I pray you, learn wisdom; and if you have been troubled of late, if you have had trials from God, yield to him, yield to him. Old Master Quarles gives a quaint picture of a man who is striking at an enemy with a flail. The person assaulted runs right into the striker's arms, and so escapes the force of the stroke, and Quarles adds the remark, “The farther off the heavier the blow.” Sinner, run in, run into God's bosom to-night. Say “I will arise and go unto my Father.” God will not smite you if you come there. How can he? The Lord says, “Let him take hold of my strength.” When that arm is lifted to scourge you, lay hold of it. Lay hold upon that arm of strength as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, for in him God hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the people. Hang on the arm that else might smite you. Trust in the Lord, sinner, through Jesus Christ, the atoning sacrifice, and you shall find peace with him. Ask him with humble submission to put away the sin that has made you suffer, and has nearly cost you your soul. Pray him to search you, and find out the sin. Repent and believe the gospel. Forsake evil and cling to the Saviour, the great Physician who heals the disease of sin, and you shall live. Come now to your Father's home. Those rags, that hungry belly, those swine and filthy troughs, those citizens that would not help you, that blindest of all citizens whose only kindness lay in degrading you lower than you were before—all these are sent to fetch you home. Believe it, soul, and say, “I will arise and go unto my Father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned”; and while you are yet saying it you shall have the kiss of his love, the embraces of his affection, the robe of his righteousness, and the fattened calf of spiritual food, and there shall be merriment concerning you, both on earth and in heaven. The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Job xxxiv.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—91, 701.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ONE GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 23RD, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple."—
Matthew xii. 6.

OUR Lord intended, of course, to assert that he himself was greater than the temple, but he used the most modest form of putting it. When in the interests of truth he is obliged to speak of himself his meekness and lowliness are always apparent in the mode in which he makes the personal allusion, and every one can see that he does not seek his own glory, or desire the praise of man. In the instance before us he says, "In this place is one," or, as some read it, "is *something* greater than the temple." He who is truly meek and lowly is not afraid to speak the truth about himself, for he has no jealousy about his reputation for humility, and is quite willing to be thought proud by the ungenerous, for he knows that he only speaks of himself in order to glorify God or promote truth. There is a native peculiarity in true lowliness which shows itself in the very form of its utterances, and wards off the imputation of boasting.

We do not find the passage now before us in any other gospel but that of Matthew. It is so important, so sententious, and withal must have been so startling to those who heard it, that we should not have been astonished if we had found it in all the four evangelists. Only Matthew records it, and he most fittingly, since he is in some respects the evangelist of the Hebrews; for, as you know, he began his book by saying, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," and he evidently adapted his gospel to the Jews. As the Jews would be the last to receive teaching which in any way lowered the temple, it is all the more remarkable that Matthew inserted our Lord's words in the gospel which he designed to be read by them. But, though the words occur but once, we must not, therefore, regard them as being any the less weighty, for the sentence comes with a preface which shows the force our Lord intends to throw into it. The

... who are his enemies? If judg-
 ment shall be done, when his anger does but gently
 ... the winds of justice fan it to
 ... the fires of the mountains
 ... the sheet of fire, so shall
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 ... think of this. He
 ... a sword death upon the tree
 ... enemies, thank you, who have
 ... when he visits them for
 ... God, lest he tear

"I will arise and go unto my Father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned"; and while you are yet saying it you shall have the kiss of his love, the embraces of his affection, the robe of his righteousness, and the fatted calf of spiritual food, and you shall be merry concerning you, both on earth and in heaven. Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE RE

Hymns FROM "O"

his deigning to reveal himself therein. "Exceeding magnificent" as it was, it was far below the divine greatness, and only worthy to be called his footstool. If we were to dwell on any one of the attributes of his Godhead, it would be more and more clear that Christ is greater than the temple, but the point is one which none of us doubt. After all, the temple was but a symbol, and Jesus is the substance; it was but the shadow of which he is the reality. Albeit that every Hebrew heart leaped for joy when it thought of the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts, and that this day every Jewish spirit laments the departed glories of Zion, yet was the holy and beautiful house a figure of good things to come, and not the very image of the covenant blessings. It was not essential to the world's well being, for lo! its disappearance has brought light and life to the Gentiles. It is not needful to true religion now, for the time is come when they that worship Jehovah adore him in no consecrated shrines, but worship him in spirit and in truth. But our Lord Jesus is truth and substance. He is essential to our light and life, and could he be taken from us earth's hope would be quenched for ever. Emmanuel, God with us, thou art greater than the temple!

This fact it was necessary for our Lord to mention, in order to justify his disciples in having rubbed ears of corn together to eat on the Sabbath day. He said, "the priests in the sanctuary profane the Sabbath, and are blameless." They were engaged in the labours of sacrifice, and service all through the Sabbath-day, yet nobody accused them of breaking the law of the Sabbath. Why? Because the authority of the temple exempted its servants from the letter of the law. "But," saith our Lord, "I am greater than the temple, therefore, surely I have power to allow my servants who are about my business to refresh themselves with food now that they are hungry, and since I have given them my sanction to exercise the little labour involved in rubbing out a few grains of wheat, they are beyond all censure. If the sanction of the temple allows the greater labour, much more shall the sanction of one who is greater than the temple allow the less. As the Son of God, Christ is under no law. As man he has kept the law, and honoured it for our sakes, because he stood as our surety and our substitute; but he himself in the essence of his nature is the law maker, and above all law. Who shall arraign the eternal Son, and call the Judge of all the earth to account? "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth."

But now we must pass on to other meanings, and view our Lord in his blessed personality as the Son of man as well as the Son of God. He is greater than the temple, for *he is a more glorious enshrinement of Deity*. The temple was great above all buildings because it was the house of God, but it was only so in a measure, for the Eternal is not to be contained within walls and curtains. "Howbeit," says Stephen, "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?" How remarkably Stephen does, as it were, pass over the temple with a mere word; he merely mentions it in a sentence, "But Solomon built him a house,"

as if no stress needed to be laid upon the circumstance. It is remarkable that from the moment the temple was built true religion in Israel began to decline, and the abominable shrines of heathen idols were set up in the holy land. The glory of even an allowed ritualism is fatal to spiritual religion. From a pompous worship of the true to the worship of the false the step is very easy. When God dwelt in the tent, in the days of David, religion flourished far better than in the days when the ark abode in a great house garnished with precious stones for beauty, and overlaid with pure gold. Still within the holy of holies the Lord peculiarly revealed himself, and at the one temple upon Zion sacrifices and offerings were presented, for God was there. The presence of God, as you know, in the temple and the tabernacle was known by the shining of the bright light called the Shekinah between the wings of the cherubim over the ark of the covenant. We often forget that the presence of God in the most holy place was a matter of faith to all but the high priest. Once in the year the high priest went within the awful veil, but we do not know that even he ever dared to look upon the blaze of splendour. God dwelleth in light that no man may approach unto. The smoke of the incense from the priest's censer was needed partly to veil the exceeding glory of the divine presence, lest even those chosen eyes should suffer blindness. No one else went into the hallowed shrine, and only he once in the year. That symbolical pavilion of Jehovah is not for a moment to be compared with our Lord Jesus, who is the true dwelling-place of the Godhead, for "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." What a masterly sentence that is! None but the Holy Ghost could surely have compacted words into such a sentence,—*"In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."* "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." The manifestation of the Godhead in Christ is not unapproachable, for we may freely come to Jesus: a voice out of the excellent glory bids us come boldly unto the throne of the heavenly grace. We cannot come too often, nor be too long in our approaches unto Jesus, the true mercy-seat. The atonement has been offered, and the veil of the temple, that is to say, the flesh of Christ, has been rent, and now we may approach the Godhead in Christ Jesus without trembling. Verily, as I think of God, incarnate God in Jesus Christ, and dwelling among the sons of men, I feel how true it is, *"In this place is one greater than the temple."*

Another sense of the words is this—*Our Lord is a fuller revelation of truth than the temple ever was.* The temple taught a thousand truths of which we cannot now speak particularly. To the instructed Israelite there was a wealth of meaning about each court of the temple, and every one of its golden vessels. Not a ceremony was without its measure of instruction. If the Spirit of God opened up the types of the holy and beautiful house to him, the Israelite must have had a very clear intimation of the good things to come. Still there was nothing in the temple but the type: the substance was not there. The blood of bulls and goats was there, but not the atonement that taketh away sin. The smoke of the holy incense from the golden censer was there, but not the sweet merits of the great law-fulfiller. The seven-branched candlestick was there, but the Spirit of God was not yet given. The

shewbread stood on the holy table, but food for souls could not be found in the finest of the wheat. The temple had but the types; and Christ is greater than the temple because in him we have the realities, or, as Paul calls them, "the very image of the things." "The figure for the time then present" had its uses, but it is by no means comparable to the actual covenant blessing. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. There were some truths, however, and these among the most precious, which the temple did not teach at all. I do not know, for instance, where we can read adoption in the symbols of the temple, or the great truth of our union with Jesus, and other priceless doctrines which cluster around the cross and the resurrection; but in the person of Jesus we read the exceeding riches of divine grace, and see by faith the inexhaustible treasures of the covenant. In Jesus we see at once "our Kinsman and our God." In the person of Christ we read the infinite eternal love of God towards his own redeemed ones, and the intimate intercourse which this love has established between God and man. Glimpses of this the temple may perhaps have given, for it did intimate that the Lord would dwell among his people, but only to eyes anointed seven times with the eye-salve would these high mysterious doctrines have been visible. The fundamental truths of the everlasting gospel are all to be seen in Jesus Christ by the wayfaring man, and the more he is studied the more plainly do these matchless truths shine forth. God has fully revealed himself in his Son. There is in fact no wisdom needful to our soul's welfare but that which shines forth in him, and nothing worth the learning but that which the Spirit of God teaches us concerning him, for he is to the full "the wisdom of God." Know Christ and you know the Father. Does he not himself say, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father"?

Again, the Redeemer is greater than the temple, because *he is a more abiding evidence of divine favour*. God for ever dwells in Christ Jesus, and this is the eternal sign of his favour to his people. There were some things in the first temple which were rich tokens of good to Israel, but none of these were in the temple to which our Lord pointed when he uttered these words. Remember, he looked at Herod's temple, the temple which you may call the second, but which in some respects was more truly a third temple. In Solomon's temple there were four precious things which were absent in Christ's day. First there was the ark of the covenant, which precious chest was above all other things the token of Israel's high relationship to God, and the assurance of the Lord's grace to his covenanted people. The ark was lost at the Babylonian destruction of the city, and thus the Holy of Holies lost its most sacred piece of furniture: the throne of the great King was gone. There were no wings of cherubim above the mercy-seat of pure gold, no tables of stone engraved by the divine hand were within the golden coffer, and Aaron's rod that budded and the pot of manna were both gone. Now, in our blessed Lord you find the covenant itself and all that it contains, for thus saith the Lord, "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." His blood is "the blood of the everlasting covenant," and he himself is given for "a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles."

(Isaiah xlii. 6.) Jesus Christ is the covenant between God and his redeemed, he is its substance, its seal, its surety, its messenger, its all. In our Lord we see the fulness of covenanted blessing. His are the covering wings beneath which we dwell in safety; and his is the propitiatory, or mercy-seat, whereby we draw near to God. In him we see the tables of the law honoured and fulfilled, priestly authority exercised with a living and fruit-bearing sceptre, and heavenly food laid up for the chosen people. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and all the promises are yea and amen in him. Thus in Jesus we find what the temple had lost.

The second temple also lacked the *Shekinah*. The throne being gone, the symbol of the royal presence departed too. The supernatural light did not shine forth within the holy place in Herod's temple. The glory had departed, or at least that particular form of it, and though the second temple became more glorious than the first because the Messiah himself appeared within it, yet it missed that symbolic splendour of which the Israelite was wont to say, "Thou that dwellest between the cherubim shine forth." But in our Lord Jesus we may always see the brightness of the Father's glory, the light of Jehovah's smile. Around his brow abides the light of everlasting love. Have you not seen the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?

They had lost also from the second temple the Urim and the Thummim. Precisely what the Urim and the Thummim may have been we do not know, but this peculiar mystery of blessing had a connection with the breastplate and with the high priest who wore it, so that when men went up to the temple to inquire, they received answers as from the sacred oracle, and whatsoever cases were spread before the Lord, an answer was given by the high priest, through the lights and perfections, or the Urim and Thummim with which the priest was girded. That was lost also after the Babylonian captivity. But in Jesus Christ the lights and perfection always abide, and if any man would know anything, let him learn of him, for he by the Eternal Spirit still guides his children into all truth, solves their difficulties, removes their doubts, and comforts their hearts, giving to them still light and perfection, each one according to their measure as he is able to bear it now, and preparing for each one the unclouded light and the spotless perfection of eternal glory.

The second temple had also lost the sacred fire. You remember when the temple was opened the fire came down and consumed the sacrifice, — a fire from heaven, which fire was carefully watched both night and day, and always fed with the prescribed fuel, if indeed it needed to be fed at all. This the Jews had no longer, and they were compelled to use other fire to burn upon the altar of God, fire which they had probably consecrated by rites and ceremonies, but which was not the same flame which had actually descended from heaven. Behold, beloved, how far our Lord Jesus is greater than the temple, for this day is that word fulfilled in your ears—"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." He has given to his church now to be immersed in the fiery element of his Spirit. She dwells in the everlasting burnings of the divine power, the Lord himself has exalted her to this. Now are her lamps kindled by flame from heaven and her sacrifices are consumed by consecrated

flames, while, all around, that same Spirit is a wall of fire to preserve the chosen from their enemies. In the perpetual baptism of the Holy Ghost the saints find power and life. So that everything which of old was regarded as a special token of God's love to Israel, though missing from the second temple, is in reality to be found in Jesus Christ our Lord, and so he is greater than the temple.

Furthermore, he is greater than the temple, because *he is a more sure place of consolation*. Brethren, when a guilty conscience wished for relief the man in the olden times went up to the temple and presented his sin offering; but you and I find a more effectual sin offering in our crucified Lord whenever our soul is burdened, for by it we are in very deed cleansed from sin. The Jew was not really cleansed, but only typically; ours is an actual and abiding deliverance from sin, its guilt, and its defilement. We have no more consciousness of it when the blood of Jesus Christ is applied to our souls. Oh, come ye evermore, ye burdened ones, to Christ's body as to a temple, and see your sin put away by his finished atonement, and then go your way comforted. The Israelites were wont to go to the temple in time of trouble to make supplication: it is very pleasant to think of heart-broken Hannah standing in the tabernacle before the Lord pouring out her silent complaint. Come, beloved, you too may speak in your heart unto the Lord whenever you will, and you will be heard. No Eli is near to judge you harshly and rebuke you sharply, but a better priest is at hand to sympathise with you, for he himself is touched with a feeling of our infirmity. Fear not, you shall obtain an answer of peace, and the blessing given shall bear the sweet name of Samuel, because you asked it of the Lord. To Jesus you may come as to the temple, when like Hezekiah you are made to smart by a blasphemous letter, or any other oppression: here you may spread the matter before the Lord with a certainty that the Lord, who is greater than the temple, will give you an answer of peace in reference to the trial which you leave in his hands. No doubt some went to the temple without faith in the spiritual part of the matter, and so came away unconsolated; but you, coming to Jesus Christ, with your spirit taught of God, shall find sure consolation in him.

Only once more, our Lord is greater than the temple because *he is a more glorious centre of worship*. Towards the temple all the Israelites prayed. Daniel prayed with his window opened towards Jerusalem, and the scattered in every land turned towards that point of the compass where Jerusalem was situated, and so they made supplication. To-day not Jews alone but Gentiles, men of every race, speaking every language under heaven, turn towards thee, "thou great Redeemer," the true temple of the living God. Myriads redeemed by blood in heaven, and multitudes redeemed by blood on earth, all make the Christ of God the centre of their perpetual adoration. The day shall come when all kings shall bow before him, and all nations shall call him blessed. To him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is God to the glory of God the Father. Brethren, is not it sweet to think of Jesus as being at this very moment the central point to which all devout believers turn their eyes? Let the Mohammedan have his Kebab, and the Jew his temple, as for us we turn our eyes to the risen Saviour, and with all the

saints we offer prayer to God through him. Through him both Jews and Gentiles have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

II. Now, secondly, and briefly, JESUS OUGHT TO BE REGARDED AS GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE.

We ought to think of him then *with greater joy* than even the Jew did of the holy and beautiful house. The eighty-fourth Psalm shows us how the king of Israel loved the house of the Lord. He cries, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." But oh, my soul, how amiable is Christ! How altogether lovely is thy Redeemer and thy God. If the devout Israelite could say, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord," and if at the sight of the temple he cried, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion," how ought our heart to exult at the very thought of Jesus, our incarnate God! What intense pleasure, what rapture it ought to cause us to think that God in very deed does dwell among men in the person of his well-beloved Son! I wonder we are not carried away into extravagances of delight at this thought, and that we do not become like them that dream. I marvel that we are so cold and chill when we have before us a fact which might make angelic hearts thrill with wonder. God incarnate! God my kinsman! Bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh! Surely if we were to dance as David did before the ark, we might scarcely need to excuse ourselves to the heartless Michals who would ridicule our enthusiasm. Oh, the bliss of knowing that God is in Christ Jesus!

We ought also to consider our Lord with *greater wonder* than that with which men surveyed the temple. As I have already said, the temple was a great marvel, and would be so even now if it were still standing. Those huge stones were so well prepared by art, and were themselves so massive, that they did not need to be cemented together, and they fitted so closely that the thinnest knife could not be inserted between them, so polished and so compact were they. The house itself abounded with gold, silver, and precious stones; it was a treasury as well as a temple. For size it was remarkable too, if we consider the entire range of the buildings attached to it. The level space within which the actual temple stood is said to have been about one thousand feet square, and it is asserted that it would have contained twice as many people as the huge colosseum at Rome. The actual temple was but a small building comparatively, but its appurtenances and Solomon's porch, which surrounded the square on which it stood, made up a great mass of building, and the magnificent bridge which joined the lone hill to the rest of Jerusalem was a marvel of architecture; Solomon's ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord was one of the sights which quite overcame the queen of Sheba. The brightness of the white marble, and the abundance of gold must have made it a sight to gaze upon with tears in one's eyes to think that man could erect such a house, and that it should be for the true God. I do not wonder at all that men were bidden to go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks, and consider her palaces. Neither are we astonished that invaders quailed before the strength of her defences, "They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away." The like of this temple was not to be

seen on the face of the earth : neither the pyramids of Egypt, nor the piles of Nineveh, nor the towers of Babylon, could rival the temple of the living God at Jerusalem : but, my brethren, think of Jesus and you will wonder more. What are the huge stones ? What are the delicate carvings, and what the cedar, and what the overlays of gold, and what the veil of fine twined linen, and what all the gorgeous pomp of the ceremonials compared with God, the everlasting God, veiled in human flesh ? Wonder, my brethren, wonder, bow low and adore. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh."

Being greater than the temple our Lord is to be *visited with greater frequency*. The males of Israel were to go up to the temple three times in a year. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house," says David : for they would be there always. Oh, my brethren, you may enjoy the happiness of these blessed ones, and dwell in Jesus always. You may come up to the Lord Jesus whenever you will. All days are appointed feasts with him. You need not wait for the new moons or the Sabbaths, you may resort to him at all times. We that have believed do enter into a perpetual Sabbath, in which we may continually worship the Most High in the person of Christ.

Let us also *revere him with still greater solemnity*. The devout Jews put off their shoes from off their feet when they entered the temple enclosure. True, in our Lord's day, much of this solemnity had been forgotten and they bought and sold within the great enclosure around the temple the beasts and birds that were necessary for sacrifice ; but as a rule the Jews always treated the temple with profound respect. With what reverence shall we worship our Lord Jesus ? Let us never speak lightly nor think lightly of him, but may our innermost spirits worship him as the eternal God.

Let us honour him also with *higher service*. The service of the temple was full of pomp and gorgeous ceremonies, and kings brought their treasures there. With what assiduity did David store up his gold and silver to build the house, and with what skill did Solomon carry out the details of that mighty piece of architecture. Come ye and worship Christ after that fashion. Bring him the calves of your lips, bring him your body, soul and spirit, as a living sacrifice ; yea bring him your gold and silver and your substance for he is greater than the temple and deserves larger gifts and higher consecration than the temple had from its most ardent lovers. Surely I need not argue the point, for you who love him know that you can never do enough for him.

So, too, he ought to be sought after with *more vehement desire* if he be greater than the temple. David said he "longed, yea even panted for the courts of the Lord ;" with what longings and pantings ought we to long for Christ ! In answer to her Lord's promise to come again the church cries, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus." We ought to long more for the second advent of our Lord ; especially ought we, if we mourn his absence from our own souls, never to rest until he reveals himself to us again. Oh, ye redeemed ones, love him so that you can no more live without his smile than the wife can live without her husband's love ; and long ye for fellowship with him as the bride for the wedding day.

Set your hearts upon him, and hunger and thirst after him. The Jew pined to visit Mount Zion, and with such pining I bid you long for Jesus and for the time when you shall see him face to face.

III. Now, we have to spend a few minutes in urging home one or two PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS which arise out of this subject.

And the first is this: *how carefully should the laws of Jesus Christ be observed.* I believe that when you entered the temple by passing through the Beautiful Gate you saw a notice that worshippers should pass in on the right hand, and that afterwards they were to pass out on the left. I am quite sure that if the temple now stood, and any one of us could make a journey to Jerusalem we should be very careful to observe every order of the sanctuary, and if we found the porter at the gate said "you must take off your shoes," we should with gladness remove them; or if he bade us wash we would gladly enter the bath. Knowing that God dwelt there, had we been Israelites we should have been very attentive to every observance required of the law. Now, brethren, let us be equally attentive to all the laws of Christ, for he is greater than the temple. Never trifle with his commands, nor tamper with them. Remember, if you break one of the least of his commandments, and teach men so, you will be least in the kingdom of God. He is very gracious, and forgives, but still disobedience brings injury to our own souls. I beseech all Christians to search the Scriptures and see what Christ's mind is upon every moot point, whether it be baptism or church government, and when you know his will carry it out. Do not say of any precept, "That is non-essential," for everything that Jesus bids you do is essential to the perfection of your obedience. If you say it is not essential to salvation I am compelled to rebuke you. What, are you so selfish that you only think about your own salvation? and because you are saved will you kick against your Saviour and say, "I do not care to do this because I can be saved even if I neglect it." This is not the spirit of a child of God. I pray you, dear friends, do what I anxiously wish to do myself, follow the Lord fully, and go step by step where he would have you go, for if you would obey temple rules much more should you obey the rules of Christ.

The next reflection is *how much more ought we to value Christ than any outward ordinance.* It is not always that all Christians do this. There is a dear brother who loves Christ, and I can see Christ in him, I am sure I can; if I know anything about Christ at all in my own soul I see that he knows him too. Very well: but then he does not belong to my church! It is a pity; he ought to be as right as I am, and I wish he knew better. But at the same time his love to Christ is more to be esteemed than his correctness in outward things, for Christ is greater than the temple. I am not going to quarrel with any brother in Christ because he is somewhat in error about external ordinances, for he has the spirit if not the letter of the matter. I wish he had been baptised with water, but I see he is baptised with the Holy Ghost, and therefore he is my brother. I wish that he would observe the water baptism because Christ bids him, but still if he does not I am glad that his Master has given him the Holy Spirit, and I rejoice to own that he has the vital matter. Perhaps he does not come to the Lord's Supper, and does not believe in it. I am very sorry for him, for

he loses a great privilege, but if I see that he has communion with Christ I know that Christ is greater than the temple, and that inward communion is greater than the external sign. Hence it happens that if we see Christ in persons with whose theology we do not agree, and whose forms of Church government we cannot commend, we must set the Christ within above the outward forms, and receive the brother still. The brother is wrong, but if we see the Lord in him, let us love him, for Christ is greater than the temple. We dare not exalt any outward ordinance above Christ, as the test of a man's Christianity. We would die for the defence of those outward ordinances which Christ commands, but for all that the Lord himself is greater than the ordinance, and we love all the members of his mystical body.

Another reflection is this : *how much more important it is for you that you should go to Christ than that you should go to any place which you suppose to be the house of God.* How many times from this pulpit have we disclaimed all idea that this particular building has any sanctity about it. We know that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, yet there may be some of you who come here very regularly, who have great respect for the place. If you did not go to any place of worship you would think yourselves very bad, and so you would be. If you never went on the Lord's day to the worship of God at all you would certainly be keeping yourselves out of the place where you may hope that God will bless you. But is it not a strange thing that you would not like to stop away from the temple, but you stop away from Christ, and while you go up to the outward sanctuary to the real Christ you have never gone. I am sure you would feel ashamed if anybody were able to say of you "There is a man here who has not been to a place of worship for twelve months." You would look down upon a man of whom that could be said. Yes, but if there be any reasons for coming to what you think the temple, how many more reasons are there for coming to Christ; and if you would think it wrong to stop away from the public place of worship for twelve months, how much more wrong must it be to stop away from Jesus all your life; but you have done so. Will you please to think of that?

Now, had you gone to the temple, you would have felt towards it very great respect and reverence. And when you come to the outward place of worship, you are very attentive, and respectful to the place—let me ask you, have you been respectful to Christ? How is it that you live without faith in him? No prayer is offered by you to him, you do not accept the great salvation which he is prepared to give. Practically, you despise him, and turn your backs upon him. You would not do so to the temple, why do you do so to Christ? Oh, that you unconverted ones knew the uses of Christ. Do you remember what Joab did when Solomon was provoked to slay him. Joab fled, and though he had no right to go into the temple, yet he felt it was a case of necessity, and hoping to save his life he rushed up to the altar, and held by the altar's horn. Benaiah came to him with a sword, and said, "Come forth," and what did Joab say? "Nay," he said, "but I will die here;" and Benaiah had to go back and ask Solomon, "What is to be done?" and Solomon said, "Do as he hath said," and so he slew him right against the altar. Now, if you come to Christ, though the

avenger of blood is after you, you will be safe. He may come to you and say, "Come forth," but you will reply, "I will die here." You cannot die there, for he shall hide thee in the secret of his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide thee, and with thy hand upon the blood-stained horn no Benaiah, and no devil, and no destroying angel can touch thee. Sinner, it is your only hope. You will be lost for ever, the sword shall pierce through your soul to your everlasting destruction; but fly now unto Christ the temple, and lay hold upon the altar's horn, and let this be on your mind—

"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away I know
I must for ever die."

"But if I die with mercy sought,
When I've this altar tried,
This were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died."

By faith, this morning, I put my hand upon the altar's horn. All my hope, dread Sovereign, lies in the blood of thy dear Son. Brethren in Christ, let us all lay our hands there once again. Poor sinner, if you have never done this before do it now, and say in your heart,

"My faith doth lay her hand
Upon that altar's horn,
And see my bleeding Lord at hand
Who all my sin has borne."

Christ is greater than the temple, may his great benediction rest upon you. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Psalms lxxxiv. and lxxxvii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—84 (Song II.), 820, 427.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 30TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God.”—James iv. 7.

THIS advice should not need much pressing. “Submit yourselves unto God”—is it not right upon the very face of it? Is it not wise? Does not conscience tell us that we ought to submit? Does not reason bear witness that it must be best to do so? “Submit yourselves unto God.” Should not the creature be submissive to the Creator, to whom it owes its existence, without whom it had never been, and without whose continuous good pleasure it would at once cease to be? Our Creator is infinitely good, and his will is love: to submit to one who is “too wise to err, too good to be unkind,” should not be hard. If he were a tyrant it might be courageous to resist, but since he is a Father it is ungrateful to rebel. He cannot do anything which is not perfectly just, nor will he do aught which is inconsistent with the best interests of our race; therefore to resist him is to contend against one’s own advantage, and, like the untamed bullock, to kick against the pricks to our own hurt. “Submit yourselves unto God”—it is what angels do, what kings and prophets have done, what the best of men delight in—there is therefore no dishonour nor sorrow in so doing. All nature is submissive to his laws; suns and stars yield to his behests, we shall but be in harmony with the universe in willingly bowing to his sway. “Submit yourselves unto God”—you must do it whether you are willing to do so or not. Who can stand out against the Almighty? For puny man to oppose the Lord is for the chaff to set itself in battle array with the wind, or for the tow to make war with the flame. As well might man attempt to turn back the tide of ocean, or check the march of the hosts of heaven as dream of overcoming the Omnipotent. The Eternal God is irresistible, and any rebellion against his government must soon end in total defeat. By the mouth of his servant Isaiah the Lord challenges his enemies, saying, “Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go

through them, I would burn them together." God will be sure to overthrow his adversaries: he may in his infinite patience permit the rebel to continue for a while in his revolt, but as surely as the Lord liveth he will compel every knee to bow before him, and every tongue to confess that he is the living God. "Submit yourselves unto God." Who would do otherwise, since not to submit is injurious now, and will be fatal in the end? If we oppose the Most High, our opposition must lead on to defeat and destruction, for the adversaries of the Lord shall be as the fat of rams, into smoke shall they consume away. For the man who strives with his Maker there remains a fearful looking for of judgment and the dread reward of everlasting punishment. Who will be so foolhardy as to provoke such a result?

"Submit yourselves unto God" is a precept which to thoughtful men is a plain dictate of reason, and it needs few arguments to support it. Yet because of our foolishness the text enforces it by a "Therefore," which "Therefore" is to be found in the previous verse,—“He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God.” His wrath and his mercy both argue for submission. We are both driven and drawn to it. The Romans were wont to say of their empire that its motto was to spare the vanquished, but to war continually against the proud. This saying aptly sets forth the procedure of the Most High. He aims all his arrows at the lofty, and turns the edge of his sword against the stubborn; but the moment he sees signs of submission his pity comes to the front, and through the merits of his Son his abounding mercy forgives the fault. Is not this an excellent reason for submission? Who can refuse to be vanquished by love? Who will not say as our hymn puts it—

“Lord, thou hast won, at length I yield;
My heart, by mighty grace compell'd,
Surrenders all to thee;
Against thy terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against thy love?
Love conquers even me.”

If resistance will only call forth the omnipotent wrath of God, but true submission will lead to the obtaining of his plenteous grace, who will continue in arms? I shall not tarry to carry the argument further, but aim at once to press home this precept upon you as God the Holy Ghost may enable me. I believe it to be addressed both to saint and sinner, and therefore I shall urge it home first upon the child of God, and say to all of you who love the Lord, “Submit yourselves to God;” and then we shall take a little longer time to say in deep solemnity to those who are not reconciled to God by the death of his Son, “Submit yourselves to God” if ye would be saved.

I. TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD, “Submit yourselves unto God.” He is your God, your Father, your friend, yield yourselves to him. What does this counsel mean? It means, first *exercise humility*. We do well to interpret a text by its connection: now the connection here is “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble,” and therefore the submission here meant must include humility, even if it be not the chief thing intended. Brothers and sisters, let us take our right place before God. And what is that? Is it the highest

seat in the synagogue? Is it the place of those who thank God that they are not as other men are? I scarcely need reply, for you who are the children of God will not dream of occupying such a position. If by reason of temporary foolishness you ever boast, I am sure, my dear friends, when you think over it in the watches of the night you are very much ashamed of yourselves, and would be glad to eat your own words. A pardoned sinner boasting! A debtor to sovereign grace extolling himself! It is horrible. Nothing can be more out of place than boasting upon the lips of a child of God. If I heard Balaam's ass speak I should impute it to a miracle that it should use the language of man, but that a man of God should use the braying of vanity is a miracle another way, not of God but of Satan. Is it not one of the fundamental truths of our faith that we are saved by grace? And what says the apostle? "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." The word "excluded" means *shut out*. Boasting comes to the door, it knocks, it pleads for admission, but it is excluded. Possibly through our unwatchfulness it gains a momentary entrance, but as soon as ever the grace of God within us ascertains that the intruder is within our gates it ejects him, shuts the door in his face, and bars him out, and in answer to the question "Where is boasting then?" free grace replies, "It is excluded, by the law of grace." If all the good we have has been given to us freely by divine favour, in what can we glory? If we possess the highest degree of spirituality, if our life be perfectly clear from any open fault, and if our hearts be wholly consecrated unto the Lord, yet we are unprofitable servants; we have done no more than it was our duty to have done. But, alas, we fall far short of this, for we have not done what it was our duty to have done, and in many things we fail and come short of the glory of God. The right position of a Christian is to walk with lowly humility before God, and with meekness towards his fellow Christians. The lowest room becomes us most, and the lowest seat in that room. Look at Paul, who knew far more of Christ than we do, and who served him far better. It is edifying to notice his expressions. He is an apostle, and he will by no means allow any one to question his calling, for he has received it of the Lord; but what does he say? "Not meet to be called an apostle." What can be lowlier than this? But we shall see him descending far below it. He takes his place among the ordinary saints, and he will not give up his claim to be numbered with them, for he has made his calling and election sure; but where does he sit among the people of God? He styles himself "less than the least of all saints." There is no small a descent from "not meet to be called an apostle" to "less than the least of all saints;" but he went lower yet, for at another time he confessed himself to be still a sinner, and coming into the assembly of sinners where does he take his position? He writes himself down as "the chief of sinners." This is submission to God, the true surrender of every proud pretension or conceited claim. If, my brethren, the Lord has called us to be ministers, let us ever feel that we are not worthy of so great a grace: since he has made us saints, let us confess that the very least of our brethren is more esteemed by us than we dare to esteem ourselves; and since we know that we are sinners let us look at our sins under that aspect which most reveals their heinousness, for

in some respects and under certain lights there are evils in our character which make us guiltier than the rest of our fellow sinners. The stool of repentance and the foot of the cross are the favourite positions of instructed Christians.

Such humility is not at all inconsistent with believing that we are saved, nor with the fullest assurance of faith, nay, not at all inconsistent with the nearest familiarity with God. Listen to Abraham : "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, I that am but dust and ashes." He has drawn very near to the Lord, and speaks with him as a man speaketh with his friend, and yet he says "I am but dust and ashes." His boldness did not destroy his humbleness, nor his sense of nothingness hinder his near approach to the Lord. My dear brethren, we know that in Christ we are accepted, we know that we are dear to God and loved with an everlasting love, we know that he hears our prayers and answers us continually, we know that we walk in the light of his countenance ; but still our posture should always be that of deep humiliation before the Lord, and in the attitude of complete submission we should sit at the Master's feet and say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." May the Holy Spirit work this gracious submission in every regenerated soul.

Let us next observe that our text bears a second meaning, namely, that of *submission to the divine will*: that of course would strike you in the wording of the verse—"Submit yourselves therefore to God." Beloved Christian friends, be willing to accept whatever God appoints. Let us each pray to be

"Simple, teachable and mild,
Awed into a little child ;
Pleased with all the Lord provides,
Wean'd from all the world besides."

Is it indeed so with us ? Are you not some of you very far from it ? Are you quite sure that you are submissive to the divine will as to your rank in society ? Have you accepted your position in the scale of worldly wealth ? Are you satisfied to be sickly, obscure, or of small ability ? Are God's appointments your contentments ? Too many professors are quarrelling with God that they are not other than they are. This is evil, and shows that pride is still in their hearts, for were they conscious of their own deserts they would know that anything short of hell is more than we deserve, and as long as we are not in the pit of torment gratitude becomes us. It is a happy thing when the mind is brought to submit to all the chastisements of God, and to acquiesce in all the trials of his providence. Knowing as we do that all these things work together for our good, and that we never endure a smart more than our heavenly Father knows to be needful, we are bound to submit ourselves cheerfully to all that he appoints. Though no trial for the present is joyous, but grievous, yet ought we to resign ourselves to it because of its after results. Even the beasts of the field may teach us this. I read the other day of an elephant which had lost its sight : it was brought to the surgeon, and he placed some powerful substance upon the eye, which caused it great pain, and of course the huge creature was very restless during the operation. After a while it began

to see a little, and when it was brought the next day to the operator it was as docile as a lamb, for it evidently perceived that benefit had resulted from the painful application. If such a creature has enough intelligence to perceive the benefit, and to accept the pain, how much more should we! Since we know that we owe infinite blessings to the rod of the covenant we ought to be willing to bare our own back to the scourge, and let the Lord do as he wills with us. Yea, I go beyond this, even if we did not know that good would come of it, we ought to submit because it is the Lord's will, for he has a right to do whatever he wills with us. Can you subscribe to this? As a true child can you make a complete surrender to your Father's good pleasure? If not, you have not fully learned the mind of Christ. It is a great thing to have the soul entirely submitted to God about everything, so that we never wish to have anything in providence other than God would have it to be, nor desire to have anything in his Word altered: not one ordinance of the church of God, not one doctrine of revelation, not one precept or warning other than it is. We shall never be at rest till we come to this. It is essential to our happiness to say at all times, "Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt." Brothers and sisters, ought it not so to be? Who ought to rule in the house but the Father? Who should govern in the body but the Head? Who should lead the flock but the Shepherd? We owe so much to Jesus, and so entirely belong to him, that even were it put to the vote, all of us would give our suffrages so that the Lord Jesus should be King, Head and Chief among us; for is he not the Firstborn among many brethren? Submit, then, my brethren. Beseech the Holy Spirit to bow your wills to complete subjection. You will never be happy till self is dethroned. I know some of God's children who are in great trouble only because they will not yield to the divine will. I met with one, I believe a good sister, who said she could not forgive God for taking away her mother; and another friend said he could not see God to be a good God for he had made him suffer such terrible afflictions. Their furnace was heated seven times hotter by the fuel of rebellion which they threw into it. So long as we blame the Lord and challenge his rights, our self-tortured minds will be tossed to and fro. No father can let his boy bend his little fist in defiance, and yet treat that child with the same love and fondness as his other children, who submit themselves to him. You cannot enjoy your heavenly Father's smile, my dear brother or sister, till you cease from being in opposition to him, and yield the point in debate; for he has said that if we walk contrary to him he will walk contrary to us. It will be wise for you to cry, "My Father, my naughty spirit has rebelled against thee, my wicked heart has dared to question thee; but I cease from it now: let it be even as thou wilt, for I know that thou doest right." So the text means first humility, and then submission to the Lord's will. Lord, teach us both.

It means also *obedience*. Do not merely passively lie back and yield to the necessities of the position, but gird up the loins of your mind, and manifest a voluntary and active submission to your great Lord. The position of a Christian should be that of a soldier to whom the centurion saith "Go," and he goeth, and "Do this," and he doeth it.

It is not ours to question, that were to become masters ; but ours it is to obey without questioning, even as soldiers do. Submission to our Lord and Saviour will be manifested by ready obedience : delays are essentially insubordinations, and neglects are a form of rebellion. I fear that there are some Christians whose disobedience to Christ is a proof of their pride. It may be said that they do not know such and such a duty to be incumbent upon them. Ay, but there is a proud ignorance which does not care to know, a pride which despises the commandment of the Lord, and counts it non-essential and unimportant. Can such scorn be justifiable ? Is that a right temper for the Lord's servant to indulge ? Can any point in our Lord's will be unimportant to us ? Can the wish of a dear friend be trivial to those who love him ? Has Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," and shall I treat them as matters of no moment ? No, my Lord, if it were the lifting of a stone from the road, if it were the moving of a sere leaf, or the brushing away of a cobweb, if thou ordainest it, then it becomes important straightway,—important to my loving allegiance, that I may by my prompt obedience show how fully I submit myself to thee. Love is often more seen in little things than in great things. You may have in your house a servant who is disaffected, and yet she will perform all the necessary operations of the household, but the loving child attends to the little details which make up the comfort of life, and are the tests of affection. Let your love be shown by a child-like obedience, which studies to do all the Master's will in all points.

I am afraid there are some who do not obey the Master because they are proud enough to think that they know better than he does ; they judge the Lord's will instead of obeying it. Art thou a judge of the law, my brother ? Art thou to sit on the judgment-seat and say of this or that statute of the law, "This does not signify," or, "That may be set aside without any loss to me" ? This is not according to the mind of Christ, who did his Father's will and asked no questions. When next you pray, "Thy will be done in earth, even as it is in heaven," remember how they do that will before the throne of God, without hesitation, demur, or debate, being wholly subservient to every wish of the Most High. Thus, dear brethren, "Submit yourselves to God."

The expression, however, is not well worked out unless I add another explanation, and perhaps even then I have not brought out its meaning fully. "Submit yourselves to God" by *yielding your hearts to the motions of the divine Spirit* : by being impressible, sensitive, and easily affected. The Spirit of God has hard work with many Christians to lead them in the right way ; they are as the horse and the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle. There is the stout oak in the forest, and a hurricane howls through it, and it is not moved, but the rush by the river yields to the faintest breath of the gale. Now, though in many things ye should be as the oak and not as the rush, yet in this thing be ye as the bulrush and be moved by the slightest breathing of the Spirit of God. The photographer's plates are rendered sensitive by a peculiar process : you shall take another sheet of glass and your friend shall stand before it as long as ever he likes, and there will be no impression produced, at

least none which will be visible to the eye; but the sensitive plate will reveal every little wrinkle of the face and perpetuate every hair of the head. Oh, to be rendered sensitive by the Spirit of God, and we can be made so by submitting ourselves entirely to his will. Is there not a promise to that effect?—"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

Sometimes the Spirit of God whispers to you, "Retire to pray." At such times enter your closet at once. Remember how David said, "When thou saidst unto me, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face Lord will I seek." The Spirit of God will sometimes impel you to a duty which involves self-denial, which will take up much of your leisure, and will bring you no very great honour as a reward. Be not disobedient to his call, but go about your work speedily. Say with the Psalmist, "I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments." The Spirit will at times urge us to deep repentance on account of faults in which we have been living, he will rebuke us for some ugly temper which we have indulged, or for some hard word which we have spoken against a brother, or because of the worldliness of mind into which we have fallen. Oh, brother, bestir thyself at such times, and examine and purge thy soul. Let a hint from the Holy Spirit be enough for thee. As the eyes of the handmaiden are towards her mistress, so let your eyes be to your Lord. The handmaid does not require the mistress to speak: it will often happen when she is waiting at table, and there are friends, the mistress nods or puts her finger up, and that is enough. She does not call out "Mary, do this or that," or speak to her loudly a dozen times, as the Lord has to do to us, but a wink suffices. So it ought to be with us; half a word from the divine Spirit, the very gentlest motion from him, should be enough guidance, and straightway we should be ready to do his bidding. In this matter it is not so much your activity as your submission to the Holy Spirit which is needed; it is not so much your running as your willing to be drawn by him. There is to be an activity in religion: we are to wrestle and to fight; but side by side with that we are to yield ourselves to the Spirit's impulse, for it is he that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure; he striveth in us mightily, and if we will but resign ourselves, and no longer be obstacles in his divine way, he will carry us to greater heights of grace, and create in us more fully the likeness of Christ. "Submit yourselves unto God." Learn the sweetness of lying passive in his hand, and knowing no will but his: learn the blessedness of giving yourselves up entirely to his divine sway, for in so doing you will enter into heaven below.

II. Now we come to that part of our discourse in which we must earnestly pray God the Holy Spirit to help us doubly. I desire now to address myself to **THOSE WHO ARE NOT SAVED**, but have some desire to be so. I am thankful to God that there should be even the faintest wish of the kind. May it grow at once into an impetuous longing; yea, may that longing be fulfilled this very morning, and may you go out of this house saved. You tell me that you have been anxious about your soul for some time, but have made no headway. You have been putting forth great efforts, you have been very diligent in attending the means of grace, in searching the Scriptures, and in

private prayer, but you cannot get on. It is very possible, my dear friend, that the reason is this, that you have not submitted yourself to God; you are trying to *do* when the best thing would be to cease from yourself, and drop into the hand of the Saviour who is able to save you, though you cannot save yourself. For a proud heart the very hardest thing is to submit. Do you find it so? "No surrender" is the stubborn sinner's motto. I have known men who would give their bodies to be burned sooner than yield to God. Their high stomach has stood out long against the Most High, and they have been little Pharaohs till the Lord has brought them to their senses: "Must I yield, must I bow at his feet?"—they could not brook such humiliation. If the gospel had tolerated their pride and given them a little credit they would have rejoiced in it; but to be tumbled in the dust, and made to confess their own nothingness they could not bear. "Submit" is wormwood and gall to haughty sinners, yet must they drink the cup or die. Hear then, ye stout-hearted, you can never be saved unless you submit, and when you are saved one of the main points in your salvation will be that you have submitted. I desire to whisper one little truth in your ear, and I pray that it may startle you: *You are submitting even now.* You say, "Not I; I am lord of myself." I know you think so, but all the while you are submitting to the devil. The verse before us hints at this. "Submit yourselves unto God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." If you do not submit to God you never will resist the devil, and you will remain constantly under his tyrannical power. Which shall be your master, God or devil, for one of these must? No man is without a master: some power or other is paramount within us, either good or evil is supreme in our hearts; and if we will not be mastered by the good, the evil has already gained the sway.

"How then am I to submit?" says one: "*To what shall I submit, and in what respects?*" Well, first, submit thyself, if thou wouldst be saved, to the Word of God. Believe it to be true. Believing it to be true, yield thyself to its force. Does it accuse thee? Confess the accusation. Does it condemn thee? Plead guilty. Does it hold out hope to thee? Grasp it. Does it command thee? Obey it. Does it guide thee? Follow it. Does it cheer thee? Believe it. Submit thyself to him who in this blessed page proclaims himself the Saviour of all such as will throw down the weapons of their rebellion and end their futile war by relying upon his power to save them.

Yield thyself, next, to thy conscience. Thou hast quarrelled with thy conscience, and thy conscience with thee. It persists in speaking, and thou desirest it to be quiet. After dissipation, in the lull which comes after a storm of evil pleasure, a voice is heard saying, "Is this right? Is this safe? Will this last? What will the end of this be? Would it not be better to seek some better and nobler thing than this?" God speaks often to men through the still small voice of conscience. Open thine ear, then, and listen. Thy conscience can do thee no hurt; it may disturb thee, but it is well to be disturbed when peace leads on to death. He was a fool who killed the watch dog because it alarmed him when thieves were breaking into his house. If conscience upbraids thee, feel its upbraiding and heed its rebuke. It is thy best friend;

faithful are its friendly wounds, but the kisses of a flattering enemy are deceitful.

God also sends many messengers. To some of you he has sent the tenderest of monitors. Harken to their admonitions and regard their kind warnings, for they mean good to thy soul. Is it hard, O son, is it hard to submit when the message comes by a mother's loving lips, when her tears bedew each word she speaks? It must have been difficult for some of you in your young days to stand out against a mother's entreaties when she not only pointed you to heaven, but led the way; not only spoke of Jesus, but reflected his love in her daily walk and conversation. You have a sister, young man, whom you love and respect: you could hardly tell how much an object of admiration she is to you. Now, that letter of hers, which you turned into a joke; you did feel it, after all. Yield to its pathetic pleadings, yield to its tender entreaties. Remember, God has other messengers whom he will send if these loving ones do not suffice. He will soon send thee a sterner summons. If thou listen not to the gentle word, the still, small voice, he can send to thee by the rougher messengers of disease and death. Be not so foolish as to provoke him so to do.

Moreover, submit yourselves to God, since he has, perhaps, already sent his messengers in sterner shapes to you. It was but a few days ago that you lost your old friend. Many a merry day you have spent together, and many a jovial night too; he was in as good health as yourself, apparently, but he was struck down, and you have followed him to the tomb. Is there no voice from that new made grave to you? Methinks your friend in his sudden end was a warning to you to be ready for the like departure! You have also yourself suffered from premonitory symptoms of sickness; perhaps you have actually been sick, and been made to lie where your only prospect was eternity; a dread eternity, how surely yours. You trembled to gaze into it, but the very tones of the surgeon's voice compelled you to do so. You feared that you would have to leave this body, and you could not help saying to yourself, "Whither shall I fly? My naked spirit, whither must it go when once it leaves the warm precincts of this house of clay?" It is not my business one-tenth as much as it is yours—but I charge you, hear the voice of these providences; listen to these solemn calls. The angel of death has stood at your bedside and pointed to you and said, "Young man, it is the fever this time and you may recover, but the next time you will never rise from the bed on which you lie: or, you have been rescued now from a dreadful accident, but the next time there will be no escape for you. Because I will do this, prepare to meet thy God."

Above all, I pray you submit yourselves, if you are conscious of such things, to the whispers of God's Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit does not strive with every man alike. Some have so grieved him that he has ceased to strive with them, or does so very occasionally and then they so resist his strivings that they are never very long continued. The worst man that lives has his better moments, the most careless has some serious thoughts; there are lucid intervals in the madness of carnal pleasure. At such times men hear what they call "their better selves." It is hardly so. I prefer to call it the general reprovings of

God's Spirit in their souls. He says to them, "Is this right? Is this wise? This trifling, this time-killing, this depraving of the soul by allowing the bodily appetites to rule, this lowering of the man to the level of the brute, can this be right? Is there no eternity? Is there no immortality, no God, no judgment to come?" The Holy Spirit sometimes opens the man's eyes as he did the eyes of Balaam, and makes him see the certainty of the judgment day and the nearness of its approach. The man is led to anticipate the trumpet's sound which heralds the assize, the coming of the Judge upon his great white throne, the gathering of the multitudes of quick and dead, the opening of the books, the dividing of the throng, the driving away of the goats to their everlasting punishment, and the reception of the righteous to their everlasting joy. Oh, when you are made to feel all this, I pray you submit yourself to it. It costs some men a great deal of trouble to be damned. Many a man who blasphemes and talks infidelity, merely does so to conceal his inward struggles. Like the boy who whistles as he goes through the churchyard to keep his courage up, they talk blasphemy to divert their mind from its own fears. He who is most fierce in the utterance of his disbelief is not the greatest disbeliever. When the heathen offered children to Moloch they beat their drums to drown the cries of the victims, and even so these men make a great noise to drown the voice of conscience. The man knows better, and I charge him to let that better knowledge come to the front and lead him to his God and Father. It will be a blessed thing for him if it shall be so even this day. "Submit yourselves to God."

If you ask me again, "*In what respect am I to submit myself?*" I answer as briefly as I can, first submit yourself by confessing your sin. Cry *peccavi*. Do not brazen it out and say "I have not sinned." You will never be pardoned while that is the case. "He that confesseth his sin shall find mercy." Sinner, choose between one of two things; judge yourself, or be judged of God. If you will judge yourself and put in a plea of guilty, then will the Great Judge grant you forgiveness, but not else. Condemn yourself and you shall not be condemned. Confess the indictment to be true, for true it is, and to deny it is to seal your doom.

Next, honour the law which condemns you. Do not persevere in picking holes in it and saying that it is too severe, and requires too much of a poor fallible creature. The law is holy, and just, and good. Put thy lips down and kiss it, though it condemn thee, and say, "though it charges me with guilt and convicts me of deadly sin, yet it is a good law, and ought not to be altered, even to save me."

Next, own the justice of the penalty. Thy sins condemn thee to hell: do not say "God is too severe; this is a punishment disproportionate to the offence." Thou wilt never be pardoned if thou thinkest so, but God will be justified in thy condemnation: the pride of thy heart will be a swift witness against thee. Confess with thy heart, "If my soul were sent to hell it is no more than I deserve." When thou hast confessed the guilt, and honoured the law, and acknowledged the justice of the penalty, then thou art nearing the position in which God can be merciful to thee.

Submit yourself, sinner—I pray you do it now—submit yourself to God

as your king. Throw down your weapons; lower your crest and cast away those robes of pride. Surrender unconditionally and say, "Lord God, I own thee now to be king; no longer like stout-hearted Pharaoh will I ask, 'Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?' but like one brought to his senses I yield as reason and grace suggest." It will go well with you when you make a full capitulation, an unconditional surrender. Fling wide the gates of the city of Mansoul, and admit the prince Emmanuel to rule as sole sovereign in every street in the city. Dispute no longer his sovereignty, but pray to be made a loyal subject, obedient in all things. Thou shalt find grace in the sight of the Lord if thou wilt do this.

Furthermore, submit yourself to God's way of saving you. Now God's way of saving you is by his grace, not by your merits; by the blood of Jesus, not by your tears and sufferings. He will justify you by your simply trusting Jesus now. Your proud heart does not admire the Lord's way of salvation; you stand up and say, "How is this consistent with morality?" As if you were the guardian of morality, as if the King of Heaven and earth could not take care of the moralities without assistance from you. Who are you to be all on a sudden the champion of morality? How dare you dream that the thrice holy God will not take care of that? He bids you trust his Son Jesus; will you do so or not? If you will not, there is no hope for you; if you will, you are saved the moment that you believe,—saved from the guilt of sin by trusting Jesus.

You must also surrender yourself at discretion to his method of operating upon you. One says, "I would believe in Jesus, sir, if I felt the horror and terror which some have experienced on account of sin." What do you demand of God that he should drag you through horrors and terrors before you will believe? Submit yourself to be saved in a gentler way. "But I read of one," says another, "who had a dream: I would believe if I saw a vision too." Must God give thee dreams? Must he play lackey to thee, and save thee in thy way? He tells thee plainly, "If thou believest on the Lord Jesus Christ thou shalt be saved." Wilt thou believe or no? For if thou dost not, neither dreams, nor visions, nor terrors, nor anything else can save thee. There is God's way, sinner: I ask thee, and perhaps thy answer will settle thy fate for ever, wilt thou follow that way or not? If thou wilt not, thou hast chosen thine own destruction; but if thou wilt have it, and wilt submit thyself to be saved by believing in Jesus Christ, it is well with thee. I know there are some in this place who feel ready to burst, for their broken hearts are saying, "I yield at once. Oh, if he would but save me." How glad I am to hear you say so, for "he giveth grace unto the humble." I recollect the time when I have stood and cried to God, "O God, if I must lie on a sick bed till I die, I care not if thou wilt but have mercy on me; if thou wilt but conquer my proud will, and make a new man of me, thou mayst do whatever thou pleasest with me; only save me from the guilt, the power of sin." It was when the Lord brought me down there that he enabled me to see life and salvation in Jesus Christ; and if he has brought you down to that point, sinner, then you have nothing to do but simply trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are assuredly saved.

When he brings you to submit he has given you his grace. Submission to his divine will is the essence of salvation. Now, who will yield? Who will yield at once? The Master has come among us, the King himself is here, your Maker, your Redeemer: see the marks of his wounds, see the scars in his hands and feet and side! He asks of you, "Will you yield to me? Will you throw down your weapons? Will you end the war? Will you surrender at discretion?" If so, he gives you his hand and says, "Go in peace; there is peace between me and thee." Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, while his wrath is kindled but a little. I prayed the Lord to give me many souls, and I believe I shall have them this morning. I feel sure of it. Grant me this favour: if you submit yourselves to Christ let me hear of it, and do not delay to unite yourselves with those who rejoice to be led in triumph as the captives of his grace.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—James iv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—181, 578, 654.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 6TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

"Until the time that his word came : the word of the Lord tried him."—Psalm cv. 19.

JOSEPH was altogether an extraordinary personage. He was a young man of great personal beauty, and he exhibited also a lovely character, full of gentleness, kindness, and truth. The grace of God had made him as beautiful in mind as nature had made him comely in person. He was also exceedingly thoughtful; perhaps at first rather more thoughtful than active; so that his brothers, not only because he had seen two remarkable visions, but probably because of his contemplative habits, said of him, "Behold, this dreamer cometh." He was the swan in the duck's nest; his superior genius and character separated him from the rest of the family, and none of them could understand him; he was, therefore, the object of their envy and hatred, so that they even proposed to murder him, and ultimately sold him for a slave. He was destined, however, for a nobler lot than theirs; they were to feed their flocks, but he was ordained to feed the world; they were to rule their own families, but he to govern the most ancient of empires. From the very beginning his supremacy in Israel had been foretold by a double dream. Their sheaves were seen to pay homage to his sheaf, while the sun and moon and eleven stars also made obeisance to him. This was the light which shone upon Joseph's early days, the star of prophecy which afterwards gilded his darkest moments and cheered him on while he endured affliction. You may rest assured, brethren, that wherever God gives extraordinary gifts or graces, and appoints an extraordinary career, he also appoints unusual trial. There is a verse—I think it is Cowper's—which says that

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

To eminence of any desirable kind there is no royal road, but we must wade through tribulation to it. For Joseph to become prime minister of Egypt the path lay through the prison-house: to all true
No. 1,277.

honour the road is difficult. Expect, then, dear friend, if God gifts thee, or if he graces thee, that he intends to try thee. Such a reflection will tone down thine exultation and prevent its degenerating into pride, and it will aid thee to gird up the loins of thy mind and stand in all sobriety, prepared for that which awaits thee. Look upon talents and graces, and high hopes of eminent usefulness as signs of inevitable tribulation. Do not congratulate yourself, and sing, "Soul, take thine ease; thou art happy in possessing such special gifts," but prepare to do the life-work to which thou art called. Thou art favoured of the Lord, but do not look for the happiness of ease, carnal enjoyment, and human approval, for "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

Joseph's worst trial happened to him when he was accused of attempting a foul assault upon his mistress. Who would not writhe under so horrible a charge? When he was put in prison, and his feet were made fast with fetters, he became exceedingly troubled, so that the iron surrounded his soul. How long he was in "durance vile," as a chained prisoner, we do not know, but it must have been some considerable period; and during those dreary months thoughts of his father and his fond love, memories of his cruel brothers, and reflections upon his sad lot, must have keenly wounded him. He was pained to remember how much his character had suffered from a woman's malicious falsehood, and most of all how much blasphemy the heathen had poured upon the name of God, whom he had represented in the house of Potiphar. Do you wonder that the iron entered into his soul?

The word of the Lord tried him very severely. Alone, in darkness, in an uncomfortable cell, his limbs fretted with chains, no one to speak to him, every one condemning him as guilty of the basest treachery towards the man who had made him his confidential and favoured servant—he found himself regarded as the offscouring of all things, and the object of ridicule to all who were about him. "The archers sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him;" but, blessed be God, his bow abode in strength, and he overcame at the last.

This morning we will commune together upon the trials of Joseph, and our own afflictions. Our first reflections shall be spent upon *the importance of trial*; secondly, we will consider *the peculiarity of the believer's trial*—for "the word of the Lord tried him;" and thirdly, we will observe *the continuance and the conclusion of the trial*,—"until the time that his word came." May the ever blessed Spirit direct our meditations.

I. First, let us dwell upon **THE IMPORTANCE OF TRIAL**. The Lord might easily have taken every one of us home to heaven the moment we were converted. Certainly his omnipotence was equal to the task of our immediate perfect sanctification. If the dying thief was rendered fit to be in Paradise the same day on which he believed, so might each one of us have been made ready to enter heaven; but it has not so pleased God. We doubt not that there are myriads before the eternal throne who have reached the abode of bliss without treading the wine-press of affliction.

"Babes hither caught from womb and breast,
 Claim right to sing above the rest;
 Because they found the happy shore,
 They never saw nor sought before."

Theirs is a victory for which they never fought; they wear a crown though they never bore a cross. To sovereign grace these blessed ones will never cease to ascribe their bliss. But as for those of us who live to riper years, it will be written concerning all of us as of others who have gone before, "These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." But why is it so appointed? Is this discipline of any use to us? The word here used is in itself a light upon the question, "The word of the Lord assayed him"—that would be the correct translation. The word of the Lord assayed Joseph as gold is assayed: it is a term best understood at the Mint, and among refiners. Trial in the Christian church is the Lord's fining pot, which is never off the fire. It has this excellent effect, that it separates the precious from the vile. As long as the church exists, I suppose she will have traitors amongst her number, for if Judas intruded under the watchful eye of the Chief Shepherd, we may be pretty sure that many a Judas will elude the far less watchful eyes of the minor shepherds. Because trial and persecution test men's professions, they are used as the winnowing fan in the Lord's hand, as it is written, "He will thoroughly purge his floor." In persecution, the mere professors, the camp-followers and hangers-on, soon flee away, for they have no heart to true religion when the profession of it involves the cross. They could walk with Jesus in silver slippers, but they cannot travel with him when his bleeding feet go barefoot over the world's rough ways, and therefore they depart every man to his own, and we may say of them "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." So that trial as a permanent institution is of much service to the church in promoting her purity, and we are bound to praise the Lord whose fire is in Zion and his furnace in Jerusalem.

A similar process goes on in the individual soul. No Christian man is all that he thinks he is; our purest gold is alloyed. We have none of us so much faith as we impute to ourselves, nor so much patience, or humility, or meekness, or love to God, or love to men. Spurious coin swells our apparent wealth. It is amazing how rich and increased in goods we are till the Lord deals with us by a trial, and then full often we discover that we are naked, and poor, and miserable in the very respects in which we boasted ourselves. Oh, man, if thou be a child of God thou art like a house which he is building with gold, and silver, and precious stones; but by reason of thine old nature thou art mixing up with the divine material much of thine own wood, and hay, and stubble; therefore is it that the fire is made to rage around thee to burn out this injurious stuff which mars the whole fabric. If the Holy Spirit be pleased to bless thine afflictions to thee then wilt thou be daily led to put away the materials of the old nature with deep abhorrence and repentance, and thus shall

the true work of God, which he has built upon the sure foundation, stand in its true beauty, and thou shalt be builded for eternity.

Every good man is not only tested by trial, but is the better for it. To the evil man affliction brings evil, he rebels against the Lord, and, like Pharaoh, his heart is hardened. But to the Christian it is good to be afflicted, for, when sanctified by the Spirit trial is a means of instruction to him, second to none in value. The rod of God teacheth us more than all the voices of his ministers. When the Christian has been passed through the fire, the assaying, by removing the dross, adds a new lustre to the gold. Brother, thou art not what thou shalt be, nor canst thou be what thou shalt be except through a measure of trial. Child, it is needful for thee to feel the weight of thy Father's hand, or thou wilt never behave thyself as a man. Thou must see his face veiled with frowns, and hear his voice in harshness chiding thee for thy transgressions, otherwise thou wilt always retain the follies of childhood. Our chastisements are our promotions. They are privileges more precious than the rights of princes. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Joseph could say this, and all the Lord's Josephs either own it now or will have to own it hereafter.

Let us look a little more closely, and we shall see that trial did much for Joseph. First, *it corrected the juvenile errors of the past*. Far be it from me to find any fault with so admirable a youthful character; but it was youthful, and needed maturing. As a simple-hearted, trustful child, he certainly told his dreams quite as freely as it was wise to have done. Perhaps he thought that his brothers and his father would have been as gratified as himself, but even his father rebuked him, and his brothers were indignant to the last degree. It was natural that a boy of seventeen should be pleased with the thought of power and eminence, but such a feeling might have gendered evil, and therefore it needed to be toned down, and its eager expression kept within bounds. We find Joseph more self-possessed and more reticent by-and-by, and we read in after life that he restrained himself—ay, when the strongest passions were at work within him, and his own brother Benjamin was before him, he sacrificed his feelings to the dictates of prudence. We see no more boyish exultation, no more telling of his dreams: in quietness and confidence he found his strength. This he no doubt learned amid the sorrows of his prison-house.

He was, perhaps, also in his early days too much in a hurry to realise the promised blessing. He would see the sheaves do obeisance to his sheaf at once, while he and his brethren were as yet but green corn, and the harvest had not come: hence the pleasure he had in the coat of many colours which his father's fondness put upon him. He thought the dream was being realised, no doubt, when that princely garment was put upon him, and he began in some measure to exercise the dignity which the Lord had promised him by reporting his brethren to his father, which action I do not condemn, but it, no doubt, made his brothers feel that he took too much upon himself, since they were many of them old enough to have been his father, and had families of their own. At any rate, he had not learned then, as he had to learn afterwards, during thirteen weary years, that visions tarry, and that we must wait for them, since the promise is not for to-day nor for to-

morrow, but abides until it reaches ripeness. God promiseth us great things which we see not as yet, and therefore we must with patience wait for them—we must not put on the coat of many colours yet, nor be hasty to rebuke our elder brothers, for we are not yet set on high by the hand of the Lord. Joseph had his royal coat in due time, and he had the fullest conceivable opportunity for reproving his brothers when in after days they went down into Egypt to buy corn, and their hearts smote them for all the wrong that they had done to him. In prison Joseph learned to wait: I do not know a harder or more valuable lesson. It is worth while to suffer slander and to feel the fret of fetters to acquire the patience which sits still and knows that Jehovah is God. To tarry awhile and not to pluck our fruit while it is yet green and sour, this is rare wisdom. To be instructed to leave the time as well as the form of the blessing in the hands of God is to have been to school with the best result.

Joseph also learned in his trial much that was good for present use. For instance, he found by sweet experience that the divine presence can cheer us anywhere. If he had always been at home with his father, always his father's darling, he would have known that the love of God is sweet to a favoured youth, but no one would have been astonished at that. Even Satan would have said, "Well may he rejoice in thee, O Lord. Hast thou not set a hedge about him and all that he hath?" But he learned that God could be with him when he was sold for the price of a slave: with him when led as a captive across the desert, when he walked wearily by the camel's side with the Ishmaelites: with him in the slave mart to find him a master who might appreciate him; with him when he became a servant in the house, by blessing him, prospering him, and causing him to find favour in the eyes of his master till he became overseer of all that Potiphar had: and then, best of all, though some would say worst of all, he learned that God could be with him in a dungeon. He could not have known that if he had stopped at home, he must be brought into the thick darkness, that the brightness of the divine presence might be the more fully seen. There is nothing in this world so delightful as the light of God's countenance when all around is dark. You may tell me that the presence of Jesus is glorious upon Tabor's glorious mount, and I will not contradict you, though I have realised the poet's words—

"At the too transporting light
Darkness rushes o'er my sight."

but give me the soft subdued light of God's love in adversity; Christ on the stormy waters for me: Christ in the midst of the furnace with his persecuted ones. Never does the Lord's love taste so sweet as when all the world is wormwood and gall. See how the mother presses her dear babe to her bosom when it is sick, or has had a bone broken. The little one may run about the house at other times, and the mother is pleased with it and loves it, but if you want to see all her tenderness, if you would read all her heart, you should see her when it scarcely breathes, when she fears that every moment will be its last. Then all the mother is revealed. How she fondles it, and what a store of sweet words she brings forth. So, if you would see all of God, you

must know what deeps of trouble mean, for then the great heart, the glorious, infinite love comes welling over, and the soul is filled with all the fulness of God. It was worth while, I say, for Joseph to be falsely accused, and to be laid in irons, to learn experimentally the supporting power of the heavenly Father's smile.

There, too, Joseph learned that temporal things are not to be depended upon. The indulgences of his father's house end in his being sold as a slave, and the coat of many colours is dipped in blood. His prosperity in the house of Potiphar also came to a sudden end, and from being an overseer he became a prisoner in irons. Now he knew that earthly good is not to be depended on, and therefore not worthy to be the object of pursuit to an immortal soul: he sees that all things beneath the moon change, waxing and waning as doth the moon herself, and he learns to look to something higher and more stable than circumstances and surroundings.

Here, too, he was instructed in one sad truth, which we are all so slow to learn, namely, to "cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" I do not think Joseph had learned that fully when he interpreted the dream of the butler. It was very natural, and therefore not to be censured that he should say, "Think of me when it shall be well with thee;" but when two whole years had passed and all the while he was forgotten, Joseph must have felt that, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm." He ceased from man, and no longer looked for enlargement from that quarter. Cost us what it may, we are great gainers by any process which enables us to say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." It is a blessed thing when providence knocks away all the dog-shores, and lets the vessel launch into her true element. See how freely she floats upon the deep sea of God's everlasting love and immutable faithfulness. She is no more liable to decay from the dry rot of carnal confidence, but on the broad sea of divine power "she walks the waters as a thing of life" in joyful reliance upon the ever blessed God. Confidence in man seems bred in our bone, but it must be taken out of us, and happy shall the day be which sees us rid of all hope but that which stays itself upon the Lord alone.

But, dear brethren, the chief use of trial to Joseph and to us is very often *seen in our future lives*. While Joseph was tried in prison God's great object was to prepare him for the government which awaited him. It was designed first to give him power to bear power: a rare acquirement. Solomon says, "As the fining pot to silver, and the furnace to gold, so is a man to his praise." Many a man can bear affliction, but few men can endure prosperity; and I have marked it, and you must have marked it too, that the most perilous thing in all the world is to step suddenly from obscurity into power. Have we not seen men, illiterate and unknown, suddenly introduced to the Christian pulpit, and made much of, and has it not frequently turned out that their names have been by-and-by prudently forgotten, for they were overthrown by the dizzy heights to which they were lifted? It is far better that a man should fight his way up to his position, that he should be assailed by enemies and distrusted by friends, and should pass through

a probationary career. Even then he can only stand as the Lord holds him, but without it he is in especial peril. Hence the apostle says, "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." If I knew that some young man here present would be greatly owned of God in the future, and become in future a prince in our Israel, if by lifting up of this finger I could screen him from fierce criticism, misrepresentation, and abuse, I would not do it, because, severe as the ordeal might be to him, I am persuaded it is needful that he should pass through it in order to make him able to bear the giddy heights of the position for which God intends him. Joseph on the throne of Egypt, I know not what he might have been if first of all he had not been laid in the stocks. His feet learned to stand fast on a throne through having been set fast in a dungeon. His gold chain was worn without pride because he had worn a chain of iron; and he was fit to be the ruler of princes because he had himself been a servant among prisoners. Through his trial God gave him power to bear power, and this is a far rarer gift than the power to endure oppression and contempt.

Joseph was also trained to bear the other dangers of prosperity. These are neither few nor small. Great riches and high positions are not to be desired. Agur's prayer is a wise one: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Joseph was in great peril when he came to be lord over the land of Egypt, but during his time in prison he had been learning to spell out a mystery and answer a riddle. Practically, his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream was what he had been learning in prison, namely, that it is idle to boast of the fat kine, since the lean kine can soon eat them up, and it is unwise to be proud of the full ears, because the withered ears can soon devour them. Pharaoh saw in the dream the lean devouring the full-fleshed, but Joseph alone understood it. He saw his fat kine when he was in his father's house eaten up when he was sold as a slave; he saw his full ears when he was in Potiphar's house devoured by the withered ears when he was thrown into prison, and he now knew that there was nothing here below worth our relying upon, since on the chariot of all earthly good there rides a Nemesis, and every day is followed by a night. He was tutored to be a ruler for he had learned the prisoner's side of politics, and felt how hard it was for men to be unjustly condemned without trial. He foresaw that this could not be for ever endured, and that one day the long-suffering lean kine would be goaded to fury, and would eat up the fat ones that oppressed them. Hence Joseph's rule would be just and generous, for in this he would see the elements which would preserve law and order, and prevent the poorer sort from overturning everything.

In the prison, too, he had learned to speak out. His whole course had been a rehearsal fitting him to be bravely truthful before the king. What temptation was there to him when he stood before Pharaoh to conceal his faith in God? To him, I say, who had risked life and lost liberty for God's sake? It would have been a very great temptation to an ordinary young man not to say anything about the one God in the presence of the head of the Egyptian superstitions, but this did not suggest itself to Joseph. Had he confessed his God in Potiphar's

house? Did he not say to Potiphar's wicked wife, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God"? He had stood to his God in prison, and told the butler and baker that "interpretations belong unto God:" and now he stands before Pharaoh he does not flinch for a moment, but he says "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Why, brethren, have you ever thought of the moral courage of Joseph in interpreting that dream? All the soothsayers were there who had tried to interpret it and could not—was it likely the heathen king would believe a youth who had been a slave and was fresh brought from a dungeon? When he foretold seven years of plenty and seven years of famine, it was a marvel that Pharaoh believed him. If the narrative had gone on to say, "Then the king said unto his servants, cast this man into prison and feed him with the bread of affliction and the water of affliction until we see whether his word shall come to pass," we should not have been at all surprised. The magicians naturally enough would be ready to say that he was set on to give this preposterous interpretation by persons interested in selling corn; or else they would urge that a man who dared to foretell events so utterly improbable had better be sent back to his prison house. But Joseph believed the word of the Lord, and he spoke with the accent of conviction, and Pharaoh believed also. Whence came this simple-minded courage? Whence this boldness? It was the right royal valour which doth hedge about a virtuous soul—or rather the fearlessness which follows from the fear of God. He stood forth and delivered his message, and the Lord established his word. He had been preparing for this in the day of his sorrow: like a good sword-blade, he had been passed through the fire and through the fire again, that now he might not fail in the day of battle. Oh, dear brothers and sisters, may you gain as much from tribulation as Joseph did, and you will do so if the Holy Spirit sanctifies them to you.

II. We must pass on secondly to notice **THE PECULIARITY OF THE TRIAL.** According to the text, "the word of the Lord tried him." This might have escaped our observation if the Spirit of God had not placed it upon record. "The word of the Lord tried him." How was that? Potiphar tried him, and the chains tried him, but did the word of the Lord try him? Yes. But there is a previous question—how did he receive any word of the Lord? There was no Bible then; Moses had not lived, there was not even the book of Genesis,—what word of God had he? His dreams were to him the word of God, for they were communications from heaven; the instruction he received from his father was also the word of God to him; his knowledge of the covenant which God had made with Abraham and Isaac, and his father Jacob, was God's word to him. Moreover, the secret teachings of the Holy Spirit quickened his conscience and afforded him light on the way. When there was no written word the divine Spirit spoke without words, impressing truth upon the heart itself. All these were to Joseph the word of God. How did it try him? It tried him thus,—the word said to him in his conscience, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Without that word he would not have been tried, for nature suggested compliance with his mistress's desires. The pleasure of ease, of wealth, of favour, were to be had through that woman's smile, but the word

of God came in and said, "Thou shalt not," and Joseph was tried. The test, however, he could bear: grace enabled him to flee youthful lusts and to cry, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

The trial which arose out of his innocence must have again tested him by the word of God. There he is in prison—for what? Why, for an action so pure that had he been set on a throne for it he would have well deserved it. Do you not think that many questions perplexed him while he lay in prison? Would not the evil spirit say, "Were you not a fool after all? Do you not think that your chastity was mere superstition?" Thus would the purity of his heart be tried, and the word would search him, and test his hatred of sin. Would not the word of God try his constancy as it asked, "Do you now believe?" What problems were put before him—Is there a moral governor of the universe? If so why does he allow the innocent to suffer? Why am I in fetters, and the lewd woman in favour? Could not an omnipotent God deliver me? Why then does he leave me here? Could Joseph in the face of such questions still cling to the faithful word? He could, and he did; but the word tried him, and proved his constancy, his faith, and his integrity.

Then, too, the word of the Lord which he had heard many years before would come to him and try him. His trembling heart would say, Has God ever spoken to you at all? Those dreams, were they not childish? That voice which you thought you heard in your heart was it not imagination? This providence of God which has prospered you wherever you have gone was it not after all good luck? Has the living God ever revealed himself to one who at length became a slave? Look at your fetters, and ask if you can be his child? And then I suspect that during the time in which Joseph was fettered the word of God had ceased to speak to him as of old: he did not dream nor interpret dreams, and that seems to have been the especial way in which the Lord revealed himself to him. Brother, do you know what it is to be tried by the cessation of comfortable communications? Did you ever live for a time without feeling any text of Scripture applied to your soul, without beholding any vivid flashes of the divine light, or any in-streamings of the Spirit's power through the word? If you have been so afflicted, you have been tempted to enquire, did the Lord ever speak to me at all? Have I been truly converted, or is it after all a myth? And these things which I have looked upon as communications from heaven, have they been after all nothing but the vapours of a heated brain? The word of God tried him, and he had to weigh himself in the balances of the sanctuary.

The bright promise of future good would also try him. His fears would say "How is it possible that your brothers should pay homage to you? You are far away from your family and cannot hope to see them again—as for the sheaves that did obeisance to your sheaf, where are they? You are shut up and cannot come forth. Within these walls the jealous Potiphar has doomed you to die." The word of God would say to him then, "Can you believe me? Can you trust the Lord to fulfil his promises?" Oh, my brethren, it is easy for us to talk about this, but if we had to pass through the same

ordeal, lying friendless in a dungeon under an accusation of guilt which we abhorred, far away from all we loved, we might feel the word of God to be a very trying thing, and perhaps the dark thought might even flit across our spirit, "Would God I had never heard that word but could have lived as the Egyptians do, for then I might have been dwelling in pleasure in Potiphar's house still. But this word of God, into what trials has it dragged me, into what difficulties has it thrown me. Is it, after all, worth while to know it?" I remember once being very, very ill, and a man who had no godliness, but who was full of wicked wit, accosted me thus. "Ah, you see, whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." "Yes," I said, "I am suffering greatly." "Well," said he with a sneer, "I can do very well without such love, so long as I get off such chastening." I burst into tears, and my very soul boiled over as I cried "If the Lord were to grind me to powder, I would accept it at his hands, so that I might but have his love. It is you who need to be pitied, for sound as your health may be and merry as you look, you are a poor creature, since you have missed the only thing worth living for." I let fly a volley at him, I could not help it. I felt forced to stand up for my Master. Joseph took the Lord's yoke upon him gladly, and found rest unto his soul. He counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the luxuries of Potiphar's house. Thus the word tried him and he was found upright.

I have no doubt the word of the Lord tried Joseph in this way. That word seemed to say, "You thought you loved your father's God, Joseph, do you love him now? You have lost your father's house, you have forfeited the ease of Potiphar's household, you have sacrificed your liberty, and perhaps the next thing will be that you will be taken out to die, can you still hold fast to the Lord?" Joseph was firm in his allegiance, and prepared to follow the Lord at all hazards to the death. The word had come to him, and it tried his steadfastness. Now I may be addressing some young men who are getting into all sorts of trouble through being Christians. I congratulate you! Thus does the Lord train his bravest soldiers. I may be addressing some of you older men who are passing through storms of trial mainly because you hold fast your integrity. I congratulate you! Rejoice ye in this day and leap for joy, for you are only enduring trials which have fallen to the lot of better men than yourselves. Men do not put base metal into the furnace, they spend their assaying upon precious gold. I see in the fact of your trial some evidence of your value, and I congratulate you, my brethren, and pray the Lord to bear you up and bear you through, that like Joseph you may be of great service to Israel and bring glory to God.

III. The last thought is THE CONTINUANCE AND THE CONCLUSION OF THE TRIAL. Trial does not last for ever. Cheer up; the tide ebbs out, but the flood will return again. Note the word "*until*." He who counts the stars also numbers your sorrows, and if he ordains the number ten your trials will never be eleven. The text says, "*until*"; for the Lord appoints the bounds of the proud waters, and they shall no more go over your soul when they reach the boundary of the divine "*until*." "Until the time that his word came"—the same word which tried Joseph in due time set him free. If the Lord gives the turnkey

permission to keep us in prison there we must remain, *until* he sends a warrant for our liberation, and then all the devils in hell cannot hold us in bondage for an instant longer. My dear brother, I want you in your trouble to look entirely to God, whose word is a word of power. He speaks, and it is done. He has spoken trouble to you, but he can just as readily speak comfort to you. Never mind what the butler's word is. Do not entreat him, saying, "When it is well with thee speak a word for me." The butler's word will not avail, it is Jehovah's word you need, for "where the word of a king is there is power." It is a blessed thing to know that trouble comes direct from God, whatever the secondary agent may be. You must not say, "I could have borne it if it had not been for that wicked woman." Never mind the wicked woman, look to God as overruling her malice and everything else. He sends the trial, and therefore look to him to deliver you from it.

"Tis he that lifts our comforts high,
Or sinks them in the grave."

He shuts us up in prison, and he brings us out again.

The time was in God's hands, and it was very wisely ordered. Suppose that the butler had thought of Joseph, and had spoken to Pharaoh about the interpretation of his dream, the probabilities are that when the courtiers of Pharaoh's court heard it they would have made the halls of the palace ring with laughter; and the magicians would especially have poured scorn on the idea that a slave boy who had been imprisoned for scandalous behaviour knew more about interpreting dreams than the wise men of Egypt who had been brought up to the art and had gained high degrees in the profession. It would have been a theme of ridicule all over the land. It was the wrong time, and God would not let the butler recollect, because that recollection would have marred the plot and spoiled the whole business: but God's "*until*" came at the nick of time when Joseph was ready for court, and when Pharaoh was ready to appreciate Joseph. The hour needed its man, and here was the hour for the man. The straight way from the dungeon to the throne was not open until Pharaoh dreamed his dream,—then must Joseph come forth and not before. Oh, brother, sit still and wait. The deliverance you are craving for is not ripe yet; wait while the word tries you, for that same word will in due time set you free.

The word set him free in a way which cleared his character, for never a whisper would be raised against him, and Potiphar would know the truth, even if he had not already guessed it. It set him free in a way which secured his eminence, and gave him the means of providing for his father and his household. He might have been liberated from prison before, and have remained only a common person, or gone back to be a slave to some new master; but now his liberation secured his emancipation from slavery and set him in the position which enabled him to provide for his father and his family in the land of Goshen, and so the sheaves did homage to his sheaf, and the sun and moon and eleven stars fulfilled the vision which he had seen so many years before.

You see, brethren, there is a time of deliverance, and the time is fixed of God, and it is a right time: therefore we have quietly to wait

for it. Doth not the husbandman wait for the precious fruits of the earth, and will not you tarry for the fruits of the promise? Be not impetuous. Hush those murmuring thoughts, never allow rash expressions to escape your lips. Bear on, young man, bear on. Ay, and greyheaded man, bear on, bear on. The anvil breaks the hammers in the long run; bear on, bear on. The rock breaks the billows, and is not itself broken. Bear the trials which come to you from God and from his word with joy and patience, for the end is not yet, but when it cometh it shall be everlasting joy.

I think I hear some saying all round the place, "Ah, I see these believers are a very tried people, who would wish to be one of them?" Harken, friend, and I will tell thee something. Joseph was not the only person in prison, and the righteous are not the only people who are afflicted. The chief butler was in prison, and the chief baker, too. I wonder whether the butler and baker are here, looking sadly to-day. If so, there is this difference between them and Joseph, that the Lord is not with them, but he is with Joseph, and that makes a vast difference, for

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage."

If God is in the prison with Joseph, Joseph is happy, but it is not so with you tried worldlings. I wonder, O butler and baker, whether you have had any dream; I wonder what has passed through your minds this morning. Wherefore look you so sadly to-day? I am no interpreter of dreams, but perhaps I can unriddle yours. Was a vine before you in your dream? That true and living vine? Did it bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit before your eyes, and did you take of its clusters, and present its pure blood to the King? If so, you will be set free; your dream means salvation: for there is a vine of the Lord's own planting whose wine maketh glad the heart of man, and he who takes of its living fruit is accepted. Dost thou know how to take those clusters and to squeeze them out? If so, the King will rejoice in thee; for nothing is so dear to him as the fruit of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus.

But hast thou dreamed of cakes which thou hast made by thine own skill? Not fruits from a vine, living and full, but mere cakes, sweetened with thine own self-righteousness, baked in the oven of thine own zeal and industry, and dost thou hope to set these before the King? The birds of the air already peck at them, thou beginnest now to feel that thy works are not altogether what thou thoughtest them to be. Oh, if this be thy dream I tremble for thee, for thou wilt come to an ill end. I pray the Lord put that dream from thee, and teach thee something better. Salvation is of the Lord; whether for butler, or baker, or Joseph, redemption is by Jesus only. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength, and they that trust in him shall never be ashamed or confounded, world without end. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Genesis xxxix. 1—7, 21—23; xl. 1—8, 23; xli. 1—9.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—214, 750, 754.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

REASONS FOR PARTING WITH SIN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 18TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—Isaiah i. 18.

It is the great joy of our heart that we do not labour in vain, nor spend our strength for naught. God is calling out from the congregations which gather here a people unto himself, who shall show forth his praise. Our heart is filled with adoring joy while we find company after company coming forward and saying, "We have found the Lord, because the Lord in mercy has found us." Unto the name of the Ever Merciful be praise for ever and ever, because his hand is stretched out still, and the Spirit of the living God is not restrained among us. Still there is a bass to this music: there are some, and these not a few, who remain unblest where others are saved: this plot of ground is rained upon and another is not rained upon: the sun shines, and hearts, like wax, are melted, but other hearts, like clay, are hardened. This last and saddest of results has happened to some for whom we hoped better things; the almost persuaded have, in fact, been our peculiar trial. Some of you, my hearers, have remained under the sound of the gospel now for years, not without impression, but without conversion. The arrows of conviction have wounded your feelings, but they have not slain your sins. Ah, how many have disappointed their best friends in this respect! They have manifested the most hopeful appearance at times: their tears have glittered like the dewdrops of the summer's morning, but, alas, their goodness has been like the morning cloud and the early dew in another respect, for it has vanished away, and they are as dry and graceless as ever they were. Nor is this all: they are even worse than they were before, for they have added to their sin, they have increased their responsibility, they have diminished the sensitiveness of their conscience, and the probabilities are daily increasing that they will perish in their sin. How terrible that they should go from the invitation of the gospel to the condemnation of the judgment seat; and

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that after having looked God's minister of mercy in the face, they should have to confront the Greater Minister of justice, from whose face they will entreat the rocks and hills to hide them. Oh that these would come to their senses, and reason with themselves, then would they listen to the call of the text, which invites them to hold converse with their Lord, and receive his grace.

Amongst these persons there are some who in their hearts venture to lay the blame of their present condition upon God. They do not exactly say so, but they mean it. They would tremble to make the accusation in set terms, they would even think it blasphemy to do so, but this is the real intent of their thought. They complain that they cannot find peace with God, though they claim that they have used all means within their power, and have been really earnest, and prayerful. They go to hear the gospel, and love to hear it, they would be very sorry if they were not able to enter the place where their favourite minister preaches, for he affords them much delight, and even when he rebukes them they admire his boldness : but though they have heard the gospel, have heard it continuously, and claim to have heard it with good intent, yet no happy result has come to them ; they have heard and their souls do not live, but they remain as they were, dead in trespasses and sin. It is not *their* fault, so they say, and we know, therefore, whose fault it must be. They have even prayed for salvation, and yet have not found it ; their chambers can bear witness that sometimes they have bowed the knee in earnest supplication, and have cried to God, and this not once nor twice but many times : and yet they remain still in their sins as undecided, unregenerate, and unforgiven as ever. Surely, say they, "This is a strange thing, that hearing the gospel has not blessed us, and that crying unto God has not brought us an answer of peace. What can be the cause ?"

It is obvious that something hinders. What can it be ? The promises of God cannot fail. Why, then, are these seekers left in the dark ? Some of these people are not anxious to know too much, and they will not be pleased when I state the true reason for their continuing without hope. They impute it to the sovereignty of God, or to some withholding of infinite love ; they put the reason into some doctrinal shape or other, and quote a text or two, so as to look orthodox, but their meaning comes to this,—it is God's fault that they are unsaved, it is certainly none of theirs. I wish that this bold way of stating their secret thought may convince them of the falsehood of it. At any rate to such I speak. Harken to me, O ye who declare that ye would fain be saved but cannot be, O ye who say that you have been in earnest about salvation but God has not been moved by your entreaties. He bids you come near and reason with him, and end this cavilling. Come now and settle this matter, and end the dispute. It is not God who shuts you out of mercy ; he declares on the contrary that as far as he is concerned he is a God ready to be gracious, and though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool. He will not admit your insinuations against his grace, in the plainest possible terms he denies your imputations. He declares that the hindrance lies on your side and not on his, and he invites you to reason with him about it,

that the truth may be clear to you. Come now, and argue with him, for I would speak on God's behalf, and press his word upon you. Oh, that this morning, while the argument goes on, your reason might be taught right reason, and your conscience might be quickened to give assent to the truth which in God's name I will declare to you, that so by the Spirit's power, being subdued by the persuasions and reasonings which we would fain use this morning, you may yield yourselves unto God, for thus he says to you, "If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel ye shall be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

It is most certain that the real reason why men who have an earnest desire to be saved, and have sincere religiousness of a certain sort, do not find peace is this, because they are in love with sin. Either some one sin is secretly indulged, or many sins are unrepented of and unforsaken. They provoke the Lord with their trespasses, and then hope to pacify him with their prayers. Hence it is altogether vain for them to tread God's courts: in vain they pray, and in vain they attend upon religious ceremonies with the view of finding peace, for they have hidden the accursed thing in the midst of the camp, they are harbouring a traitor, and until this accursed thing is destroyed, and this traitor is driven out, they cannot be acceptable to God. To all such the Word of God says, "What hast thou to do with peace while thy offences are so many?" O, ungodly man, thy heart can never rest in God while it goes forth after its idols. As long as thou and thy sins are at peace, God and thy soul must be at war. Until thou art ready to be divorced from sin thou canst never be married to Christ. God will give salvation and the pardon of sin, and give them freely to the very chief of sinners, but the sinner must confess and forsake his sin. The Lord graciously says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon": but "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked," and his word solemnly declares that "God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on in his trespasses." About this matter we will talk this morning as the Lord shall help us, and may his Holy Spirit bless us therein.

I. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." Let us have this matter out, and hear what is to be urged in favour of God's demands. IT IS A REASONABLE THING THAT SIN SHOULD BE RENOUNCED. As soon as I make that statement, every conscience here agrees with it. It is most reasonable, that if the rebel be pardoned, he should ground his arms and cease to be a rebel. Look at the demand for a minute, and it will strike you as being founded in right. It is most reasonable that we should renounce sin; that our heart should henceforth loathe it—first, *because it is most inconsistent to suppose that pardon can be given while we continue in sin.* Dear brethren, suppose God were to say to the ungodly man, "You may continue in your sin, and I will forgive you; you may go on in your rebellion, but I will never punish you for it;" what would this be but granting license to sin, and offering a premium to iniquity? How could the Judge of all the earth thus wink at iniquity? Would not

the angels cease to sing, "Holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," if the Lord could act in this manner? Where would his justice be? where his righteousness? This were to make him—I speak with reverence—an accomplice in man's sin, a justifier of transgression in the present, and a promoter of iniquity in the future. Where would moral government be, if the Lord bestowed his pardons upon those who persevere in transgression? Shall men fondle their sins, and yet be in a state of grace? Then might every adulterer and every thief say, "What mattereth it? I am forgiven. I will defile myself, and rob my neighbour yet more and more." Only fancy what the effect would be upon our country if a proclamation were issued, that henceforth all manner of offences against the law would be immediately forgiven, and men might continue still to perpetrate them. We should hasten to emigrate from such a pandemonium. The wicked might approve of such a relaxation of the bonds of law, but it would be an awful curse to the righteous. If the judge of all the earth could possibly forgive sin while men continue to indulge in it, I do not see how the world could be inhabited; it would become a den of beasts, wild and without restraint, raging against all goodness, and even against themselves. The very pillars of society would be moved if sin could be at the same time indulged by the sinner and pardoned by the Lord. And what would be the effect upon the sinner himself if such could be the case? Say to a man—you are not to be punished for your sin, and yet you may live in it still, and what worse turn could you do him? Why, sir, this would in some respects be a new curse to him. Here is a bleeding wound in my arm; the surgeon says he will allow it still to bleed, but he will remove my sense of faintness and pain. He will leave the mortal injury, but take away its attendant inconveniences, so that I may bleed to death and not know it? I would decline to have it so. Nay, let me bear the pain, if that will the more persuade me to seek the binding up of my wound. We do not want to be delivered from the punishment of sin, so much as from the sin itself, for sin bears its punishment in its bowels. Suppose there were no hell, no lake of fire into which the ungodly shall be cast, yet let the wicked live together, and indulge envy, revenge, and malice, and you will soon see that these passions would create hell. Turn men down together, and let them be selfish, ambitious, angry, lustful, jealous, and envious; take away all the restraints of moral government, and let their passions be indulged without a single hindrance. Oh, what a scene it would be! Imagine a den of wild beasts let loose upon one another! It would be a scene of peace and beauty compared with what this world would be if sin were patronised by a promise of pardon to the impenitent. Each man also would be hateful to himself; as long as he had sin within him it would be impossible for him to rest, his seething passions would boil against each other. Man is so constituted that sin means an unhealthy and unhappy condition. The machinery will not work easily unless it acts accurately; it is at once its glory and its burden that it is so. O mighty God, thy wisdom makes thee append suffering to sin. It is well that we should feel if we put our finger into the fire; it were a pity to take away the pain from the burning, lest a man should sit by the fire and lose limb after limb, and not be aware of it:

in the same manner, also, it is most meet that the unhappiness caused by sin should give us warning of the mischief it is doing to us. We do not ask God to separate the suffering from the sin (let them stand as they are), but we want to be severed from the sin, and then the suffering will go as a matter of course. It is unreasonable, man, it is unreasonable that you should expect that God will allow you to remain impenitent, and yet give you the kiss of forgiving love. It would be neither honourable to God, nor good to your fellow-men, nor really beneficial to yourself.

Is it not reasonable, too, that we should part with sin, because *sin is so grievous to God*? I never know how to express my feelings when I read this first chapter of the prophet Isaiah. I have felt a heart-breaking sympathy with God when I have read those words, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." It is so very sweet to us to have our children love us in return of our kindness to them; they are to us a very great joy and comfort, and we are very glad and thankful to God for their dutiful affection. But many a man has been ready to tear his hair when the boy that he dandled on his knee has treated him with wanton insult. With what sorrow and anguish has many a mother had to remember an ungrateful daughter! Such iron enters into the soul. Such draughts of gall embitter the inmost heart of life. And here is the good Lord, like David of old, crying, "O Israel, my son, my son." To let us see how he regards sin he describes himself as calling the universe to witness to the ingratitude which has assailed him "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider!" There is another plaintive expression in one of the prophets, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate:" as though the Creator turned pleader to his own creatures, and said, "Do not follow after that which so provokes me, and is so detestable to me." It is for our sakes that he is so grieved. We vex the Holy Spirit every time we go into sin, for he loves us much and cannot bear to see us so dreadfully hurting ourselves. Now, sinner, is it not most reasonable that if you would find peace with God you should cease from that which provokes him? Are you to go on thus vexing him and yet expect him to bless you? How would it be in your own case if you were a father? Would it not seem right and reasonable that the evil habit which vexed and broke your heart from day to day should be given up by your child? Would you not expect him to say, "My father, I did not know I was grieving thee so much as this, but now I do know it I turn from my folly: teach me how I may please thee and do that which is right in thy sight."

A third reason why sin should be given up may also be found in the chapter before us, for I am strictly following the connection of the text. Should it not be given up because of *the mischief it has already done to man*? Look at yourself, unconverted man or woman, what happiness have your transgressions brought you? What peace has the love of sin produced in your spirit? What are you now? Why, according to your own confession, you are dissatisfied and ill at ease; sometimes

thoughts of death haunt you and make you so wretched that you hardly know how to live : the dread of hell comes over you, and you have often wished you had never been born. You know it is so. You are well described in the chapter before us,—“The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint.” What has made you so sick and sorry ? What but your wrong-doing ? If you could prove that some good had come to yourself through sin, even then you ought to give it up for God’s sake, since it grieves him ; but no good has ever come of it ; ills of every sort are its only offspring. Look, prodigal, look at your rags, and see what your harlots and your boon companions have done for you ! Look at what the citizens of the far-off country have done for you,—sent you into the fields to feed swine ! In your degradation and your filthiness ask yourself is there not a cause ? What has deprived you of the comforts of a father’s house ? What has made you ready to eat the husks to stay your craving hunger ? If you were wise you would hate the sin which has served you so badly ; you would long to shake it off as Paul shook the viper into the fire, and cry to God, “Deliver me from it, O Lord, by thy Son Jesus Christ : for it is evil, only evil, and that continually ; therefore cleanse thou me, O Lord.”

Remember also, my friend, that *unless sin is repented of and forsaken no act of yours, nor ceremony of religion, nor hearing, nor praying can possibly save you.* Do you see what these Jews did ? They brought expensive offerings ; they said, “We will be very generous to the cause of God,” and therefore they brought bullocks and rams and goats by hundreds. And what does God say of it ? “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith the Lord : I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts ; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts ? Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto me ; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with ; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.” If their hearts had been right he would have accepted the smallest offering ; a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons would have been acceptable to him, but as long as they lived in uncleanness their sacrifices were vain oblations, and their sweet smelling incense was an abomination unto him. “Ah,” you have said, “I have given to the cause of God, and yet I have had no peace.” Does God accept what is given by one who practises dishonesty, or lives in pride, or revels in vice ? “Ah,” say you, “but I have always attended the means of grace.” Yes, but suppose you go from the Tabernacle to the gin palace, will your coming here be acceptable with God ? Suppose you go home to practice unholy living or continue in malice against your brother, can the Lord regard you ? Suppose you go away from the assembly of the saints to find equally congenial company in the society of sinners : then I say to you in God’s name, who hath required this at your hands, that you should tread his courts ? Does he want courtiers to surround his throne whose garments stink of the dens of Belial ? Does he want your hymns, O ye who have been singing lascivious songs ? Think ye he will endure it that men should rise from the bed of uncleanness and draw nigh to his altars ? It is scandalous to decency :

it is insulting to the infinite majesty of heaven; and yet how many there are who are secretly doing this. Let the consciences of those who hear the gospel, and yet live in known sin, attest the truth of my words; does not reason itself teach them that God must be rather angered than pleased by the worship of those who live in sin? I heard to my deep sorrow the other day of one who will walk several miles to hear me preach, and yet in the place where he lives he is known to be a drunkard. He glories in his admiration of the preacher, and yet lives scandalously. O sir, do you think the preacher gains by the admiration of such as you are? How much less can God be pleased with the adoration of men who live in open sin? Their worship is a dishonour to his blessed name. He calls your attendance at public worship the treading of his courts; it is nothing more than a mere trampling upon holy things, and if you dream that there is anything acceptable in such conduct you are grievously mistaken. If you come here that you may repent of your sins and forsake them, come and welcome; but if you imagine that coming up to the worship of God will procure the condoning of your offences you dote on a falsehood. Be not so deluded by Satan, but cast away this lie from your right hand.

"Well," saith one, "but there must be something in prayer." Hear, then, from the Lord's own mouth what there is in prayer while you continue in sin. "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." Though I cannot say of you that your hands are full of blood, yet if they are full of any sin which you love in your heart, your sacrifice will be an abomination unto God. Do you dare to bow the knee, and say, "O God, forgive me my sin, though I mean to continue in it"? How dare you offer such an impudent petition to the majesty of heaven? Is God to give you a dispensation,—a permit to sin with impunity? Is he such an One as you are, that he should answer such a wicked prayer? "O God," you practically say, "give me a sense of peace with thee, and let me still be unholy." God cannot hear such a request: I speak with reverence to his blessed name; God's holy nature forbids that he should ever listen to such a blasphemous prayer. Alter it, and say "Lord, help me to give up my sin; Lord, help me to deal righteously with my neighbours; help me to love my fellow-men, and at the same time grant me forgiveness for the past for Jesus' sake." If this be your heart-felt language, the heavenly Father meets you freely, and says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." But if you reply to that gracious word, "I am willing to accept the pardon, but am resolved to keep the sin," his reply to you will be, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies." If you refuse and rebel there is no mercy for you, but the sword shall devour you, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

II. Thus have I reasoned upon one point: let me now go further, and declare that IT IS MOST REASONABLE THAT MAN SHOULD SEEK PURITY OF HEART. You ask for pardon and forgiveness, and in return God says to you, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the

widow." Is there not reason in this command? You practically say, "Lord, enter into amity and peace with me." The Lord replies, "There is no peace to the wicked: only as you become renewed in nature can there be any peace between us." Do you dare to ask God to commune with you while you are a lover of sin? Can two walk together except they be agreed? What communion hath Christ with Belial, what fellowship hath light with darkness? You cannot have amity with God till the evil of your doings is put away from before his eyes, and this he will enable you to do. Do you refuse the work of his grace? Do you decline to be purged from every false way? Then you also decline friendship with God. You ask the Lord to make you his child; when you pray you call him "Our Father, which art in heaven," but do you not see that it is unreasonable to expect to be enrolled in his family and yet to remain the servant of Satan? What would the world say? "If this is one of God's children, what a Father he must be who has such a family!" As it is, the faults and imperfections of the Lord's children often cause men to blaspheme his name, but at any rate his children desire to be clean from sin, and he has not a child in the world that is in love with evil; this is one of the marks of his children, that they hate iniquity, and that sin is a plague and burden to them. John says, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Shall the drunkard, the liar, the oppressor, the revengeful, the pitiless, the greedy, the dishonest be called the sons of God? Shall fornicators and persons of unclean lives be called his children? True, he takes such into his household, by his mighty grace, but he washes, cleanses, and sanctifies them, making them new creatures in Christ Jesus. He receives them while they are sick with sin, but it is in order to their healing, and if that healing be refused they cannot become his sons at all.

You have asked to be a disciple of Christ in your prayer. I ask you again, how is it reasonable that you should be recognised as a disciple of Christ if you will not imitate his character, and if you do not desire to obey his commands? This man a disciple of Christ! And yet he remains an habitual drunkard, or carries on a dishonest trade, or lives in unchastity! Can he really be a Christian? Every hallowed name forbids. Such a man is a servant of the devil, not of Jesus. His servants ye are whom ye obey; there is no mistake about that matter. He that doeth sin is the servant of sin. If you yield yourselves unto evil then ye are the servants of evil, and the wrath of God abides upon you.

Often, too, you pray the Lord to take you to heaven when you die, and yet you intend to remain in your sins. Whence is this folly? Are you devoid of thought? What, carry your sins into heaven! Carry hell into heaven! Man, hast thou any reason left in thee to expect God to have it so? Shall even his own courts, where his glory blazes forth with ineffable splendour, be defiled with that which his soul abhors? Shall his enemies be admitted to insult him to his face in his own palace? It cannot be. Holiness will never brook such an intrusion; heaven's portals are guarded by omnipotence, and cannot be invaded by his enemies.

- “Those holy gates for ever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame;
None can obtain admission there
But followers of the Lamb.”

Now, my hearer, let us reason together still in God's name, while the word of the Lord shows you what it is you must be willing to become as the result of salvation. Look at the portrait drawn by Isaiah; it pictures the truly pardoned man's life towards his fellow-man. It sets him forth in those lovely colours in which the Spirit of God has adorned him. Read the 16th and 17th verses. The pardoned man has by grace been washed and made clean, his life is pure, upright, and commendable. He has put away the evil of his doings from before God's eyes, that is to say, he not only shuns open sin before the eyes of man, but he hates that also which is only seen by the eyes of God; he desires to be cleansed from secret faults, and to be pure within. He has also, by grace, been led to cease to do evil; he breaks off his sins by righteousness, and flees from unholy habits; at the same time he learns to do well; he is not perfect yet, he is a scholar and he is learning, but with all his heart he studies to be practically holy, and by divine teaching he is instructed in righteousness. He seeks judgment, and desires to deal faithfully with all, to be honest and upright, and to walk in all integrity, true to the word he speaks, even when it is to his own loss; he counts his simple word to be as binding as another man's oath, and scorns to profit by a falsehood. Nor is this all, the grace of God teaches him to love his neighbour as himself, and, therefore, he relieves the poor and oppressed, and is the generous friend of the fatherless and the widow. In almsgiving and deeds of Christian love he abounds. Here is the portrait. Do you admire it? Do you wish to be made like it? God's grace is willing to make you this, are you willing that it should operate upon you? If on the other hand your hard heart cries out, “No, I want pardon and peace, but I do not wish to be renewed in heart,” then the reply is—there is no peace for you. You are not to be saved by or for your good works, but God's salvation brings these to those in whom it works. God will not separate sanctification from justification, nor free remission from regeneration. Pardon must be followed by purity, and grace by the graces. If any man will be forgiven his sin, he must also be renewed in nature, and submit to be moulded into the blessed likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you been made willing that such should be your case?

III. IF THE SINNER REMAIN IMPENITENT IT IS MOST UNREASONABLE FOR HIM TO LAY THE BLAME OF HIS NOT BEING FORGIVEN UPON THE CHARACTER OF GOD, FOR GOD IS READY TO FORGIVE. Those who impute an unforgiving spirit to the Lord do lie, and know not the truth. God gives the master argument to confute that slander by saying—“Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool.” He is both willing and able to forgive. He is prepared to remove the ingrained sins of our nature. Scarlet dye was fixed in the very wool of the fabric before it was made up, and so is sin inwrought into our being. We were sinners by nature before we were sinners by practice: but this deep-seated stain of our nature he is able to remove, so as

to make us white as snow. Though your sins should be double-dyed as crimson was, though you should have sinned again and again and again, multiplying your transgressions, yet he is able to cleanse you; and though you should have continued long in sin as the scarlet cloth lies long in the dye, and though your sins should be glaring and startling as scarlet and crimson colours are, yea, though they should be imperial sins, as though you had put on a royal robe to defy the sovereignty of God, yet even these shall be forgiven perfectly by his grace. Not only shall some of the more glaring colour be taken out of our character, but the scarlet shall be white as snow, and the crimson, red as it was, shall be as wool; and all this by the free, unmerited grace of God. There is perfect pardon to be had by the vilest transgressor; immediate and irreversible pardon is freely given according to God's infinite mercy and abounding grace to the very chief of sinners. He waits to bestow mercy on the sons of men, and, therefore, if you have it not it is not because God is hard to propitiate. He delighteth in mercy; to the ends of the earth he makes proclamation "Let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

IV. Here is the last point upon which we will argue. IT IS A REASONABLE THING THAT GOD SHOULD DEMAND WITH THIS PARDON OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMAND. And what is that command? It is, "If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel the sword shall devour you." Great Lord, it seems most strange that men should be unwilling to be saved from their sins, and unwilling to follow the direction of perfect love! Yet, so perverse is human nature, that till thy grace makes men willing they never will lay hold upon thy abounding mercy and transcendent forgiveness, but prefer to abide in their sins. Sinner, here is the great question—are you willing? "Willing for what? I am willing to be saved from hell." Ah, who is not? What criminal is not willing to be saved from prison or the gallows? Are you willing to be saved from yourself, to be saved from loving the sin which now enthalls you, to be saved from finding pleasure in the unholiness which now enchants you, to be saved from the indulgence of evil passions which tyrannize over you; to be saved, in a word, from sin? Are you willing? Some say that they are, but when it comes to the test, and a sweet sin comes before them, like a painted Jezebel, then they are bewitched by it, they fall into its arms, and let Jesus go. Are you willing to give up any sin for Christ and every sin for Christ? The Lord demands this of you. Oh, may he also grant it to you, turning your heart of stone into a heart of flesh. May you be made truly willing to be saved from sin in God's way, that is, by simply believing in Jesus, believing in Jesus not that you may get rid of the past merely, but be delivered from the present dominion of evil. *If ye be willing*, there is the point. His people shall be willing in the day of his power, and if you are not willing, and live and die unwilling, you are none of his. Then it is added, "If ye be obedient." Whenever the Lord saves a soul he will make that soul obedient, for Jesus Christ will not take into his army soldiers who mutiny against his commands. "If ye be willing and obedient." Obedient to what? Obedient to all

gospel precepts. "Repent;" let sin be hateful to you; "Repent and be converted," that is, turn round to seek after other things and better things than you sought before. Are you willing to obey his command to love one another as Christ also hath loved you? Are you willing to be obedient to the command, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well"? "Oh," saith one, "I am willing enough to be obedient, but where is the strength to come from?" Ah, my blessed Lord does not ask you to find the strength; for that you may look to him. If you are willing he will grant you the power; nay, in making you willing he has already begun the work. If this morning he has made you truly willing to give up sin, his blessed Spirit will never leave you till sin is overcome. Jesus is able to cleanse you from the power of sin as well as from the guilt of it. The point is this—has he made you willing to be made holy? Are you at this present moment willing to be washed and cleansed? Do not answer this question till you have looked at it and marked the self-denial it will cost you. After doing so I fear that honesty will compel some of you to say, "I am not prepared to undergo the change which is here proposed." You know, my hearer, that sin in some attractive form is very sweet to you, and while it is so there can be no hope of pardon for you.

You think, perhaps, that I spoke sharply just now. The Lord knows I desire to speak in all gentleness of spirit, but I must be faithful to your souls, and by God's help I will be. As I look round I am not so utterly ignorant of you all as not to know that there are some here who love to hear me preach, and yet they love their sins. They know their characters are disgraceful, and yet they pretend to believe that they are going to heaven because they have a notional faith in Jesus. Now, sirs, when you wake up in the day of judgment and find yourselves deceived, you will be forced to own that I have not deceived you. I have never preached to you that you may live in sin if you only believe in Jesus: I have never preached that you shall be saved without being purified in heart. No, the salvation which this pulpit has proclaimed is not salvation *in* sin but salvation *from* sin, not a licence to evil but a deliverance from evil. The two-edged sword of our gospel divides between men and sin, and slays all the hopes of the impenitent and disobedient. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord": this holiness is his gift to you. Deliverance from sin is not a work of the flesh, but a work of grace: it does not spring from legal bondage, but from the gracious work of the blessed Spirit: but you must have it, you must have it, and if you will not have holiness neither shall you have heaven. There shall be no blotting out of sin unless there is a ransom from the dominion of sin. May God help you to be honest with yourself and honest with your God, who again invites you to reason with him, and entreats you not to be so unreasonable as to continue in sin and yet expect forgiveness. He invites you to cast out that evil, which is as much your enemy as it is his. He points to this stumbling-block which lies at your door, and bids you will to have it removed. He begs you to come to your senses, and awake from your dreams. Your past sin he is fully prepared to obliterate for ever, but it is your love of sin which lies

in the way. O that you would from your heart give it up, and follow after better things. May he help you now to say, "O Lord, I desire to be made pure and holy; give me strength, I pray thee, to overcome temptation, and walk in the way of thy commandments. I would be holy, even as thou art holy. To will is present with me, give me also power to do that which I would. O Lord, I would renounce my old sins, my constitutional sins, my once beloved sins. I do not ask to be tolerated in any one of them, but would be delivered from every false way, for Jesus' sake. Help me, O Lord." Your heavenly Father stands ready to help you, prepared to help you. Though you are as yet a great way off, he comes to meet you and opens his arms to embrace you. For the sake of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus he has passed an act of amnesty and oblivion for all the past, and he will rule over you for the future with the gentle sceptre of his holy love. "If ye be willing and obedient"—are you indeed so? May God grant you a subdued will and a submissive mind, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah i.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—176, 459, 489.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners."—Isaiah lvii. 18.

THERE are a few objects in nature which never cease to astonish the beholder. I think Humboldt said he could never look upon the rolling prairies without astonishment: and I suppose some of us will never be able to look upon the ocean, or to see the sun rise or set without feeling that we have before us something always fresh and always new. Now, I have been, not only for the love of it, but because of my calling of preaching it, a constant reader of Holy Scripture, and yet after these five-and-twenty years and more I frequently alight upon well known passages which astonish me as much as ever. As if I had never heard them before, they come upon me, not merely with freshness, but even so as to cause amazement in my soul. This is one of those portions of Scripture. When I read the chapter describing the wickedness, the horrible wickedness, of Israel—when I notice the strong terms which inspiration uses, and none of them too strong, to set forth the horrible wickedness of the nation—it staggers me. And then to see mercy following instead of judgment! It overwhelms me! "I have seen his ways, and"—it is not added "I will destroy him; I will sweep him away"—but "I will heal him." Verily God's grace, like the great mountains, cannot be scaled; like the deeps of the sea, it can never be fathomed, and, like space, it can never be measured. It is, like God himself, wondrous, matchless, boundless. "Oh, the depths! Oh, the depths."

I shall try to set forth the astounding grace of God, as his Spirit shall enable me, by showing, first, that *the sinner is beheld by God*.—"I have seen his ways." And yet *the sinner is nevertheless the object of divine mercy*—"I will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners."

I. The text declares that **THE SINNER HAS BEEN OBSERVED OF THE LORD**. Many a man relieves an unknown person in distress whom he
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would not think of helping if he knew his character. Some generous hearts are perpetually victimised in this way: they deal out their money to those who are altogether unworthy, but if they knew of this unworthiness they would not be so free with their gifts. Now, the Lord is aware of the unworthiness of those to whom he deals out his grace, and it is the glory of that grace that he pours it upon the utterly undeserving. He knows exactly what men are, and yet he is kind to the evil and to the unthankful. He gives his grace to those who, like Manasseh, and Saul of Tarsus, and the dying thief, have nothing but sin about them, and deserve his hot displeasure rather than his gracious love.

Notice, first, that *God's omniscience has observed the sinner*. Man while living in rebellion against God is as much under his Maker's eye as the bees in a glass hive are under your eye when you stand and watch all their movements. The eye of Jehovah never sleeps; it is never taken off from a single creature he has made. He sees man—sees him everywhere—sees him through and through, so that he not only hears his words but knows his thoughts,—does not merely behold his actions but weighs his motives, and knows what is in the man as well as that which comes out of the man. One is often led to cry, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain unto it." That God should know all, even all the little things about man's sin is a dreadful thing for unpardoned souls to think of. I was reading the other day a very pretty observation upon one of our Saviour's sayings, and I cannot help telling it to you. You remember he says two sparrows are sold for a farthing, and yet one of them does not light on the ground without your Father. But in another passage he says, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? And not one of them is forgotten of God." Do you notice that? Two for a farthing—five for two farthings; so there is an odd one thrown in for taking a double quantity. Only a sparrow! Nobody cares about that odd sparrow, but not one of them is forgotten of your heavenly Father—not the odd sparrow even. And so no stray thought of yours, no imagination, no trifle which you have quite forgotten, which indeed you never took any heed of, has escaped your heavenly Father's notice. The text is true to the fullest possible extent "I have seen his ways." God has seen your ways at home, your ways abroad, your ways in the shop, your ways in the bedchamber, your ways within as well as your ways without,—the ways of your judgment, the ways of your hope, the ways of your desire, the ways of your evil lustings, the ways of your murmurings, the ways of your pride. He has seen them all, and seen them perfectly and completely; and the wonder is that, after seeing all, he has not cut us down, but instead of it has proclaimed this amazing word of mercy, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him. I have seen all that he has done, and yet for all that I will not cast him from my presence, but I will put my mercy and my wisdom to work with divine skill to heal this sinner of the wickedness of his soul."

While we were reading the chapter I could not help feeling that it was a chapter almost too strong to read in public. I looked it through and through, and I said, "Shall I read it?" Some of its allusions are so painful that one can think of them, but one would not

like to explain them. Divine wisdom could not find anything but vices which are scarcely to be mentioned to describe the wickedness of the human heart. It is so foul a thing that he must compare it to the lewdness and filthiness of those who are given over to the utter rottenness of licentiousness. And yet, after so describing the character, the Lord says, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him. I have seen everything bad in his ways, and I have perceived nothing good in them, but nevertheless, though I know all his conduct, and see the filthiness of it all, yet will I come to him, and I will heal him."

You noticed while I was reading that the persons described were a people who *had scoffed at religion*. "Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue?" They had made the name and honour of God the subjects of profane sport. They had ridiculed God's people—calling them hypocrites, fanatics, enthusiasts, or whatever else happened to be the cant names with which they bespattered saints in those days. They had jested at virtue, and jeered at piety; and yet the Lord says, "I have seen his ways. I have heard his ungodly jests and taunting ridicule. I know his sarcasms. I know what falsehoods, what slanders, he pours forth upon my own beloved people, and my wrath rises against those that touch my anointed; but for all that I will heal him. I have seen him put out his tongue at the name of Jesus: I have seen him behave exceeding proudly when my gospel has been the subject of conversation; but for all that, though I have seen his haughty ways, I will heal him." Oh, the splendour of this grace! Is this the manner of men, O Lord God? Surely, high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are thy ways above our ways.

These people seem to have been quite *infatuated by sin*. According to the Scriptures, you will see that they could not have enough of it. What mountain was there upon which Israel had not set up her altars? What stone was there, polished by the flow of the stream, which they had not consecrated to an idol? What giant oak was there throughout all Bashan under which they had not performed mystic and diabolical rites to the false god? The land was stained with the blood of their children offered to Moloch; yea, it reeked with their infamous sins; for in the worship of their false gods their orgies were full of lewdness, and all manner of indescribable iniquities. Yet the Ever-merciful says, "I have seen it. I have seen behind the door what they have done. I have seen in the high mountains what they have done. I have seen their abominations in the groves and thickets. I have seen how eager they are after sin—how they drink it down like behemoth, who thinks to drink down Jordan at a draught. They add lust to lust in their pursuit of sin till they are maddened with it. I have seen that they are desperate sinners, but I will heal them, I will heal them." Oh beloved, this text sounds so strangely good, so singularly gracious, so exquisitely merciful, that it holds me spell-bound. It is such a surprise. Just when the harsh drum begins to sound, and war is about to let slip her dogs, there comes an unexpected pause, and meek-eyed pity, with a thousand tears, steps forward and cries, "I love them still. Only let them renounce their

ways, and to my bosom they shall be pressed, and their horrible sins shall be forgiven."

There is one expression I must dwell upon, because it is so remarkable. I should never have dared to use it if inspiration had not employed it. It is that expression in verse 9, where the Lord says, "Thou didst debase thyself even unto hell"—*even unto hell*. When a man debases himself down as low as the swine trough, that is low enough, and there are many who do that. The drunkard goes lower than the sow, for no sow would habitually intoxicate itself: few animals would even touch the defiling concoction. We talk of a man's being like a beast, but the beasts are hardly done by when we compare drunkards with them. Men sink below the mere animal, because being capable of so much higher things they make a more terrible descent when they yield themselves up to their baser appetites. Alas, there are vices of human nature from which the cattle of the field are exempt: man has debased himself below the creature over which he has received dominion. The prophet says, "they debase themselves even unto hell." I say, a man does that when he defies his Maker and blasphemes his Saviour, when after every other word he uses an oath, and lards his conversation with profane expressions, as some do. What good can there be in such wanton wickedness? What is to be gained by it? I suppose the devil himself is not such a blasphemer as some people are whom we have the misery to hear, even in our streets, as we walk along, for I suppose he has some method in his profanity, but they use it in mere lack of other words. Men sink to the level of the devil when they are unkind to their aged parents, or on the other hand unnatural to their own offspring. What shall I say of the abominable cruelty of some men to their wives? I believe that if the devil had a wife he would not treat her as many working men treat their wives. Creatures called men are frequently brought up before our police-courts, and the charges proved against them make us disgusted altogether with human nature. Would the fierce lion, the savage tiger, or the wild boar treat his mate so ill? O how many are thus debased unto hell! Yet, *yet* should this reach the ear of any one who has thus debased himself let him listen to this—"I have seen his ways. I have seen him debase himself even unto hell; yet will I heal him, and lead him, and restore comforts unto him."

"Why," says one, "that seems too good to be true." It does; and were you dealing with men it would be too good to be true, but you are dealing with one of whom it is written, "Who is a God like unto thee, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin?" "for all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." I say, once more, I do not know how to put this declaration of grace into words forcible enough. I stand astonished. I am not here to explain, I cannot explain it. I am here to set it forth, but I cannot even do that. It does so amaze me that God's electing love should cast its eye upon the very vilest of the vile, and then that he should say, "I have seen him. I know what he has done. I understand it all: and yet, nevertheless, I mean to save him, and save him I will." Heaven itself shall be amazed that ever such a wretch was saved, and hell itself shall tremble in its lowest

sleeps while it sees against what a gracious God it has dared to offend.

But I must proceed to notice, next, that God had not only seen their ways in the sense of omniscience but he had *inspected their ways in the sense of judgment*. He says, "I was wroth and I hid myself." O, sinners, do not think because we come to-night to preach free grace and dying love to you, and proclaim full pardon through the blood of Jesus, that therefore God winks at sin. No, he is a terrible God, and will by no means spare the guilty. As surely as fire consumes the stubble so does his wrath burn against wickedness, and he will utterly destroy it from off the face of the earth, for "God is angry with the wicked every day." Do not think that when these sinners of old worshipped idols, the Lord was careless as to what they did. Do not imagine that when they thrust out the tongue and mocked him he was indifferent and sat still as if he had been made of stone. Far from it. It provoked his holy mind: for he cannot look upon iniquity, neither shall evil dwell with him. He is as a consuming fire against evil, and will by no means tolerate it. And yet—and yet—he whom the angels call "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth"—the jealous God, the God who revengeth and is furious against sin, even he has said, "I have seen his ways and will heal him." Ah, if it were a matter of indifference to him—if God were hardened so that he did not care about sin as some men are, or if he were only half-sensitive to sin as we are, I could understand his forgiving sin; but when I remember that sin does as it were touch the apple of his eye, and move his heart, and vex his spirit, then I am amazed that in the same moment in which he denounces sin he looks on the sinner, and says, with tears of pity, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him. He is my child though he has played the prodigal. I hate his harlotry and the riotous living with which he has wasted his estate and mine. I hate the swine-trough and the citizens of the far-off country, but my child, my child, I love him still; and when he comes back to me I will receive him with a kiss, and I will say, 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him: put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son which was dead is alive again; he that was lost is found.'" I cannot trust myself to expatiate on this Godlike miracle of love: it is very wonderful to me and deeply touches my heart.

Yet once more on this point. It was not only that God had seen and observed the rebel, and had judged the evil of his sin, but *the Lord had tested him*. If you read the chapter through you will see that God says that he had attempted to reclaim him by chastisements. He says, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." You see, then, that the Lord tested the man. He said to himself, "Perhaps he does not feel the evil of sin. I will make him smart. These people have worshipped false gods. I will send a famine: I will send a pestilence: I will give them over into the hand of their enemies, and then perhaps they will repent." And so God did this to Israel, and the nation was brought very low. But what was the result? Did they turn under the chastening rod and confess their sin? Did they humble themselves before God? No.

He says of the nation, "He went on frowardly in the way of his heart."

How often it happens that when the Lord commences a work of grace on men he begins with some terrible judgment, laying them low that he may lift them up in due time. But how often these visitations end in disappointment! The man is sick: he lies suffering on the brink of eternity. He makes promises of reformation, but what happens when he recovers? Why, he forgets it all, and is, if anything, worse than before. Or the man is brought low by his sin, even to beggary. How often have I seen this; a man of respectable parents shivering in his rags. But when he is in his poverty does he turn from his vices? No, he whines about his follies when he sues for a little help, but when he gets it he spends the charity in drink, and continues as degraded as ever he was. Worse and worse is the way of the wicked, even though their sorrows are multiplied. Ah, my friends, all the afflictions in the world, apart from the grace of God, will only harden men. When the Lord in his mercy sends sharp providences to stir men up in their nests, and make them feel that sin is an evil thing, the general result of it—nay, the constant result of it, apart from divine grace—is that the man continues in his sin just the same as before, or only flies from one form of it to another. He is wounded by the goad, but he does not yield: he kicks against the pricks. He thinks that God has treated him very hardly. He drives himself farther off from God, and runs into despair, and says there is no hope, and therefore he may as well live as he list: he may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb, and so he plunges deeper and deeper into rebellion.

Yet notice the grace of our text and be again astonished! This person had been chastened in vain and even hardened by affliction, and yet God says, "I have seen his ways. I have seen how he grows worse and worse. I have seen how he hardens his neck. I have seen what a brazen forehead he has, and what a neck of iron he dares to lift up against me. I have seen it all, but thus my eternal purpose runs—"I will heal him, I *will* do it. I will let all the world see that grace is stronger than sin, and everlasting mercy is not to be cut short even by infamous transgressions." Oh, the depths of divine love! Truly it is past finding out.

Now, before I go to the second part of the subject I must say this. I am not speaking now of cases which happen now and then; neither am I talking about men that lived years ago, like John Newton, the African blasphemer, or John Bunyan, the village rebel. No, I am talking about a great many here before me. To a great extent I am talking about myself. I know that in me there was nothing that could have caught the eye of God to merit his regard: I know that, if I was not permitted to indulge in grosser vices, yet I went as far as I could, and should have gone infinitely farther if it had not been for his restraining grace; and in my case I feel that it is as much the free sovereign undeserved mercy of God that I am this night saved, as that the poor thief when dying on the cross received the promise, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." In every case, whether we have been moral or immoral, salvation is altogether a matter of pure favour, and in every case God has virtually said of us, "I have seen his ways. I cannot see

anything good in them. I see only what I abhor : but nevertheless I will heal him." The tears may well stand in our eyes as we think of this, I am sure they do in mine. A poor half-witted man was asked by his minister how he came to be saved, and he said, "It was between me and God. God did his part and I did the other." "Well," said the minister, "what part did you do?" The answer was, "God saved me, and I stood in his way." That is the part, I must confess, in which I was most conspicuous. I was very stubborn and wilful, and put from me the invitations of the Lord's love. I willed to remain a rebel, but he would not have it so. Did I not resist his Spirit? Did I not put from me his gospel? Did I not resolve to abide in my self-righteousness, and continue as I was? But he would not suffer it to be so, and at last I was compelled to cry, "I yield to the all-conquering grace of God, and bless the hand that sweetly bows me to its mighty sway."

II. Now we will turn to the second part of our discourse, and pause awhile while you relieve yourselves with a cough.

Notwithstanding all that we have said, THE CHOSEN SINNER IS THE OBJECT OF DIVINE MERCY TO AN EXTRAORDINARY DEGREE. Thus saith the Lord, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him : I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners." Notice how God speaks. Observe the tone and spirit of his declaration. "I will," says he : "I will, I will, I will." Now "I will" and "I shall" are for the king, nay in the highest sense they are only becoming when used by God himself. It is not for you and for me to say "I will : " we shall speak more wisely if we declare that we will if we can. We will if—God needs no "ifs." "I have seen his ways," he says : "I know what a rebel he is, but I will heal him. I know how sick he is, for from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, nothing but bruises and putrefying sores are to be seen, but I will heal him." He speaks like a God—"I will." There is no condition expressed, and there is no "peradventure" or "but," because there is no condition. He does not say, "If *he* will." No, when God says "I will," man will be made willing : be sure of that. He does not say, "I will, if man will do a part of it." No, but "I will." But suppose that *he* would not. Ay, that is not to be supposed. The Lord knows how, without violating the human will (which he never does), so to influence the heart that the man with full consent, against his former will, yields to the will of God, and is made willing in the day of God's power. I always like to think as I am preaching here, "Now, whether or not there will be anybody saved by the gospel I preach does not depend upon whether they have come up here willing or unwilling, for the Lord hath said, 'My people shall be willing in the day of my power.'" There is a higher power than the human will, whatever power there may be in that, and there certainly is a very great power, neither do I wish to deny the fact ; but there is a higher power than the will of man, else man were God, and the will of man would be omnipotence. The Lord knows how, by sacred arts of wondrous grace, to make the stout free will of man yield itself to the perfect free will of God and thus he takes the sinner captive and leads him in triumph to the feet of Christ. Glory be to God for this. If the salvation of men depended upon their being willing,

and no prevenient grace ever came to unwilling sinners, there is not one soul in all our race that ever would be saved, for we err and stray from God's ways like lost sheep, and if God waited till we came to him of ourselves, he would wait for ever in vain. No. The Good Shepherd goes after the sheep—follows it, tracks it, seizes it, throws it on his shoulders, and carries it home rejoicing. We to-night bless that mighty grace which did not stop for us to seek it, but sought us. It was like the dew which waiteth not for men, neither tarrieth for the sons of men, but comes in all its blessed cheering influences and makes the earth glad. Oh, mighty grace of God, come in that way to-night to this crowd of poor sinners without "ifs," "buts," or conditions.

Now, notice that this was the only good thing that could be done with Israel. There were two courses possible. Here is Israel bent on sin, here is God angry with that sin, and hating it with all his soul :—Israel can be destroyed : that is one thing, and it is an easy matter. The Lord has only to call flood, fire, famine, fever, or war, to sweep the nation away ; but then he is full of love, and judgment is his strange work. What is to be done then ? He must either mend them or end them—one of the two. He cannot let them go on as they are : which shall it be, destruction or salvation ? He looks at them and says, "I will heal them : that is what I will do with them. I cannot endure that they should act as they do. I will therefore set to work upon them as a physician does upon a sick patient. Though the case would be quite hopeless unless I were omnipotent, I will bring my omnipotent love to bear on this foul, leprous, rotting, loathsome sinner, and I will make him clean, pure, and lovely. I will heal him. I cannot leave him in my universe as he is, for he spreads infection all around. He defiles my sanctuary, he profanes my Sabbaths, he pollutes the very air he breathes ; he must not be suffered to go on in this way. What must I do with him ? I will not destroy him, but I will heal him." Oh, the wonder of divine mercy that ever the Lord should say that.

But do you not know that this is just the spirit which the Lord Jesus creates in the heart of his really consecrated servants towards the wicked and the fallen ? Here they are in this world, brethren, we cannot put them out of it, and we would not if we could. We are very sorry whenever the majesty of law does require the destruction of a single guilty life. What are we to do, then, with the criminal classes—with depraved men and fallen women ? What are we to do with cannibals and heathens ? In God's name we must cure them with the blessed medicine which has cured us. Think of John Williams. He hears of Erromanga. What is there in Erromanga to induce John Williams to go there ? Are they a hopeful sort of people ? No, they are hideous cannibals ; they devour men. Will they receive Mr. Williams if he lands ? Will they listen to him with respect ? Not they. The probabilities are that they will lift the war club, and he will not escape with his life. What did that devoted missionary feel ? "Those are the people that need me, and to those I will go beyond all others." And so he went, and Williams in landing at Erromanga, and in dying there, is a feeble type of Jesus coming to an ungodly and graceless world, not because there was anything good in it, but because there was no good whatever—not because they would welcome him, but because they were so fallen

that they would crucify him. The sinfulness of man was his need of a Saviour's coming, and for that very reason Jesus came. Did he not say, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. I am come as a physician, and the physician has nothing to do with the healthy, his business lies with the sick; and I am come therefore to deal with sin-sick souls." What a wondrous thing this is that God should look upon sin and say, "I see it all, and I hate it all; but, nevertheless, I mean to heal the sinner, and to lift him up from his degradation." May the Lord say that to you, dear hearer, if you are still dead in sin.

Now, notice how the Lord puts his hand to the work. He heals sin as a disease. He cannot look at it in any other light without destroying men. He says, "These creatures of mine do not love me; they must be diseased in their minds, I will heal them. They see no loveliness in my Son: they must be blind, I will open their eyes." Thus mercifully tracing our sin to its cause the Lord manifests his grace and heals the maladies of our nature.

And, blessed be God, the disease that we suffer from is a disease which he knows all about, because the text says, "I have seen his ways." Oh sinner, you will not have to tell God the symptoms of your complaint: he has seen your ways, he has seen right through your heart, and there is no physician so able to deal with a patient as the man who knows the constitution of the patient, and knows his habits, and knows all his secret history. God knows all that, and, because he knows it, it is a blessed thing that he—he, himself—with that infinite knowledge says, "I will heal him." Who else but he would know enough to be able to heal a sinner of all the sin that lies concealed within him?

And God does in very deed heal sinners. I daresay you have heard the common talk in the world. They say, "These evangelical ministers preach salvation for sinners; what is this but encouraging sin?" The gentlemen who make the observation are generally not particularly sweet themselves, but, however, we will say nothing about that; although it is an odd thing to hear accusations against the morality of the gospel from gentlemen whose own morality is not of the most delicate kind. But, still; we have a better answer. Suppose we open a hospital. Thank God, there are many in London! Here is a fever hospital. Do you hear people objecting, "Oh, you are encouraging fever." The only qualification for admission to a fever hospital is for a person to have a fever: if they have the fever they can come in. If it is a small-pox hospital, the only thing that is wanted is that they shall have the small-pox, and they may enter freely. Why don't you cry that this free statement of gratuitous admission will encourage contagious diseases. Fools! You know better. You know that the hospital is the enemy of the disease, and men are received in sickness that they may be delivered from its power. You know that it is the same with the gospel. We almost scorn to answer you; for you must be aware that to say that Jesus Christ is able to take the very vilest sinner and to save him is to promote morality in the best manner. What is salvation? Do you think we mean by that the saving people from going down to hell, and letting them live as they lived before? We never meant anything of the

sort. We mean that Jesus Christ heals people of the disease of sin; that is to say, he takes the sin away, changes their mind, renews their heart, makes them hate the sin which once they loved, and leads them to seek after the holiness which once they despised. It is true he has opened a house for thieves, drunkards, and harlots; and set the door wide open and said, "Come and welcome." But what for? Why, the sinner who enters comes to be no more a drunkard, to be no more a thief, to be no more unchaste: for this object is the guilty one invited to come to Christ, that he may have his heart renewed, not that he may have his putrid sores bound up and skinned over with some Madame Rachel stuff that may conceal the evil, but that the gangrene may be cut out and the ulcer may be removed, and the dire cancer may be torn up by the roots. This is what the gospel is for, and Jesus Christ proclaims to-night by these lips of mine that however guilty you may have been, if you desire to be healed from the plague of sin, he can and will heal you upon your believing on him. He says, "I have seen his ways, and I will heal him." Come and welcome; come and welcome, ye guiltiest of the guilty. Oh, may his infinite mercy do more than invite you? May it compel you to come in; according to that message of his at the royal supper, "Go ye out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in that my house may be filled." May his infinite mercy constrain you to come.

Then the text goes on to say, "*I will lead him also.*" The poor soul of man, even when healed, does not know which way to go. There is not a more bewildered thing in this world than a poor sinner when first he is awakened. Have you ever gone with a candle into a barn where a number of birds have roosted? Have you disturbed them? Have you not seen how they dart hither and thither, and do not know which way to fly? The light confuses them. So it is when Christ comes to poor sinners. They do not know which way to go; they see a little, but the very light confuses them. Now, the loving Lord comes in, and he says, "*I will lead him also.*" Oh, how sweetly does the Lord lead sinners first to his dear Son and bid them find in him their all in all. Then he leads the sinner to the mercy-seat, and he says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find." Then he leads the sinner to that grand old book, the Bible, and he says, "Read there, and as you read it I will open it up to you. I will open your eyes to see its hidden treasures and wonders, and lead you into all truth." "Come," says he, "I will lead you farther. I will lead you in your daily life. I will lead you as to how to act amongst the ungodly; yea, I will lead you in the paths of righteousness for my name's sake." Now, is not this very wonderful—that God should lead men who formerly would not be led, men who for years went their own way and resisted all that his judgments and providences could do to turn them? "Yes," says he, "I will lead them;" and it is wonderful how readily men will be led when God's grace renews them. I have seen the stout-hearted man who used to revile Christ and his people become a babe in grace. The idea of ever going inside a place of worship, especially of a dissenting sort, would have put him in a temper: he would spit on the ground and curse at the very mention of such a thing, and yet that man has become the

most earnest of Christians—the very man to go out and bring in others, and he has loved Christ more than many who were born and bred in the midst of religion. The Lord can make a little child to lead a lion, and can make the most obstinate rebel tender and sensitive beyond others.

I heard a man pray once at a prayer-meeting, and he did shout and halloo at such an awful rate that I did not enjoy his prayer a bit. A friend asked him, some time afterwards, whatever made him make such an awful noise in prayer. "Why," said he, "I have only been converted a very little time. I am the master of a vessel, and I used to storm and rage and go on at the sailors; and now when I get warm I cannot help making a noise. I begin to shout and halloo as I did before when I served the devil." When I heard this, I said, "Well, I hope he will go on with it." I like to see the same zeal manifested in the cause of God that a man is accustomed to use in other things when he is really warmed up. We often see people who have been most earnest against Christ become most earnest for him. Look at Saul of Tarsus: you do not want a better instance. He is exceeding mad against Christ, and nobody can stop him, till the Lord says, "I have seen his ways, and I will heal him." And what short work God made of Saul of Tarsus. Three days made a perfect cure of his eyes; but I do not suppose it took three minutes to do the essential part of the healing in his soul. He is as full of enmity to Christ as ever his heart can be, but in a moment the light shines, and he falls from his horse to the ground, and he hears the voice, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He answers, "Who art thou, Lord?" and the answer is, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." The man is changed in a shorter time than it takes to tell. It is all done. O grace of God do the like to many here to-night, and let it be seen that thy "wills" and "shalls" will stand against all human sin, and all the obstinacy of the most corrupt heart. "I have seen his ways, and I will heal him. I will lead him also."

Then there comes the last part of the text, "*I will restore comforts to him*"; for God begins by knocking our comforts away. He takes away the comfort we once had in our false peace, and he makes us mourn for sin. But after a while he restores comfort to us. What sort of comfort? The comfort of perfect forgiveness, the comfort of complete acceptance. The Father sets a warm kiss upon the child's cheek, and that is the comfort of adoption. Whereas we were heirs of earth we become heirs of heaven, and have the comforts of hope. We receive the comfort of daily fellowship, for we are admitted to speak with God, and to draw near to him; the comfort of perfect security, for we are led to feel that whether we live or die it does not matter, we are safe in the arms of Jesus; the comfort of a blessed prospect beyond the grave in the land of the hereafter, where the flowers shall never wither; the comfort of knowing that all things work together for good; the comfort of having the angels for our servants, and heaven for our home. "I will restore comforts to him," and all this—*all this* to the man of whom it is said, "Thou didst debase thyself even unto hell." All these comforts *for him*! A crown in heaven for one who, but for mercy, had been damned

in hell ; a harp of everlasting music for hands that once delighted in lascivious music ; new songs in glory for lips that once used the blasphemous oath ; the presence of Jesus and the likeness of Jesus for one that often rolled in the mire with the drunkard, or went into worse mire with the unchaste and the unclean. Tell it ! Tell it ! Tell it unto sinners the most despairing—that, if they will but come back, their heavenly Father will receive them in the name of Jesus. Go ye forth, and tell it at the corners of your streets. Go and tell it in the dens and thieves' kitchens ! Tell it in the prisons—yea, even in the condemned cell ! Go to the very gates of hell, and tell it to every soul that is this side the pit of Tophet, and as yet out of its eternal fire—that, if the wicked will but forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, he will have mercy upon him, and our God will abundantly pardon.

Tell it to thyself, poor sinner, thou that tremblest while I speak, thou who wouldst fain sink through the floor because of thy sense of sin. Thy Father comes to meet thee to-night ; if thou dost not embrace him it is thy fault, not his. His voice speaks, and says, "Come, and welcome ! come, and welcome ! Dear child of mine, come to me !"

"From the cross of Calvary,
Where the Saviour deigned to die,
What transporting sounds I hear
Bursting on my raviſhed ear.
Love's redeeming work is done,
Come and welcome, sinner, come."

O grace of God bring in the great sinners, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah li.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—248, 49 Sankey ("The Great Physician"), 219.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A REMONSTRANCE AND A REJOINDER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."—Galatians v. 6.

THE most prominent doctrine in Paul's teaching was that of justification by faith. He taught it so very plainly, so very boldly—I had almost said so very baldly—that it seemed needful to the Holy Spirit that James should bear testimony to the necessity of holiness as the result of faith. Hence the Epistle of James is put into the sacred canon lest any should wrest and twist the language of Paul from its proper meaning. His great teaching—anybody can see this with half an eye—the great teaching of Paul is that we are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. This doctrine has always been taught in the church of God, and it is, as Luther well put it, the standing or falling article—the test of a standing or a falling church. A church which holds this doctrine in its integrity, notwithstanding many errors, is still a church of Christ, but the church which denies this, whatever else it may hold, is anti-Christ, and is not a church of Christ at all. The great Reformation, for which we so often bless God, was brought about by this light. The truth, which had been hidden in darkness, being held forth in the preaching and teaching of Protestant reformers. For a long time after those eminent men had departed, the testimony of all the Protestant churches to justification by faith was clear and unwavering. You can scarcely read a sermon of any of the immediate successors of the reformers, but you will find it filled with the doctrine that man is justified through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, by faith in him, and not by the works of the law. The like testimony it was which produced the revival in the last century, when Whitfield and Wesley awoke the slumbering masses of our population as they went forth through every town and hamlet preaching the gospel. Whatever difference there might have been between those eminent evangelists and their followers, they did not differ at all upon this point—

that men are saved by believing in Jesus Christ—by resting upon the atonement once offered for human sin upon the bloody tree of Calvary. And I rejoice, dear friends, that this doctrine was never more clearly preached than now. As the time of the singing of birds hath come, and the churches are waking up and expecting a blessed springtide, I thank God that there is this sign of its being a truthful work—amongst other gracious signs this is conspicuous—that Jesus Christ is preached, and that faith in him is declared to be of paramount importance. That it is so is evident from the opposition which has been roused. I can hear the voice of the old growler. He is a gentleman that never has been wanting when the banner of Christ has been unfurled. He is beginning again to whine and snarl, as he always did, and to carp at this doctrine in particular as not according to holiness, subversive of morality, and mischievous in all its tendencies. I shall not attempt to stop their growling. Their temper tells its own tale; they do but display their natural disposition. If dogs delight to bark and bite, Dr. Watts has taught us to let them do so, “for ’tis their nature too.” I am not thinking of the cynical sceptic just now; my aim is to meet the sincere seeker. This objection takes the form of a difficulty in the minds of some who are anxious to find salvation. They say to themselves, “Can it be so? Is it possible that by simply believing on Christ himself my soul can be saved? I can comprehend that this might be made a condition upon which God should pardon me, but then that is not all I want. I want a new heart; I want a right spirit. It would be of little use for me merely to have my past sins forgiven. I want to become a better man. The salvation that I want is salvation from my sins, from temptations in the world, and from the uprisings of my own naturally depraved heart. If I cannot get that, the mere pardon of sin is a very small business. I can understand, however, that God would pardon me upon my believing in Jesus. What I want to know is what effect my believing in Jesus will have upon me personally—what change would accrue to my nature as the result of my believing.” It is about that I want to talk—faith which worketh—faith which worketh; and I want to show something about how it works. It worketh “by love.”

To begin, then, I shall first attempt to answer the enquiry, “What is the faith which saves the soul?”

And I venture to answer the question first by saying that it does not differ as a mental act from any other kind of believing. I fully admit that there is much about faith that is mysterious, and of that I may speak presently; but if any man asked me what the act of believing is I should not hesitate to reply, “I believe God just the same as I believe anybody else—believe him as I believe my father, as I believe my mother, as I believe my wife. It is the same mind which believes, and it is the like act of the mind that comes into operation. It is a rational assent. Faith is to believe what God says, to take it to be true, real, a matter of fact. Now, when I believe what a man tells me, I do not say to myself, “Well, that is a piece of my creed now,” and so put it on the shelf and have done with it. A man tells me, for instance, in the middle of the night that my house is on fire. You know what I should do. You know what you would do. You know what any

sane man would do. But when you are told in God's Word that you are in danger of the wrath to come, do you believe what you read? No, you do not, or you would not be so easy as you now are. Your imminent peril would prompt instant policy. I would to God that what men call faith in a religious point of view were as prompt in its proceedings as the common acts of faith which they exercise towards their fellow men. The fact is, the creed we profess comes often far, very far short of the credit we give to our fellow creatures about the common affairs of life. Do you want to be saved, believe God as you would believe the one that told you that your house was on fire. Believe God as you would believe your friend, believe him actively, really, truly, for that is faith. God tells you that you have transgressed against him, but that he wills not your death,—that he has therefore sent his Son into the world to suffer in the stead of sinners, and that if you rely upon his Son you shall have immediate forgiveness and shall be saved. Believe that message. Believe it to be true. You ought to believe it, for God cannot lie. It is an indisputable fact that whatever God says stands good. It is not contingent upon aught but his own will, and he is without variableness or shadow of turning. What he says he means. Believe him, then, whom ye have not seen as you would believe any one whom ye see daily. Give credit to the word he has written as you would credit any word that is spoken to you.

And if you do so believe, mark you, your faith will then resolve itself into an act of reliance. If I believe a man, when I am in trouble, and he says, "Now, sir, leave that with me; I will get you through,"—I rely upon him to do it. I leave the matter in his hands and go my way. This is the very core and pith of saving faith. It is to say, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; I am a sinner; I will trust him to save me. He, on the cross, made expiation for me, and I am at peace. My heart rests on the atonement which he has offered." It is dependence, reliance—or as the old Puritans used to say, "recumbency"—leaning upon a friend; because I have ceased to rely on myself. He takes the burden; I stand aloof. His the weight, mine the relief, free from pressure, free from anxiety. That is faith, easy, artless faith; self-renouncing, God-honouring faith; unequivocal faith; faith taken in the simple common acceptation of the word, of the act, of the feeling. The very pith, core, marrow, essence, soul of faith, is reliance upon Jesus Christ, once offered for human sin, and now gone covered with glory up to the right hand of God to represent sinners within the veil.

And this reliance, wherever it is true, may also be described as an acceptance of what God has set forth as a propitiation for sin. God has given his Son. Let me put it in other words. God himself, because he could not tarnish his justice, has descended upon earth and taken up our nature, and worn the clay garb of our humanity. God himself has suffered, has died upon the cross as if he had been guilty. The judge has taken the culprit's place and borne the vengeance due to the offender. Now, he says, "Will you accept my substitution? Shall it be so? Are you willing that I should be in your stead, that you may be in mine?" Sinner, I ask you now—and let your heart reply—are you willing that the scourging of Christ should be in the stead of your

being scourged, that by his stripes you may be healed? Are you willing that his blood should be instead of your blood—his death instead of your eternal death? Sayest thou:—

“My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin.”

Sayest thou, “I am all too glad to take this substitute, this blessed substitute, and to accept God’s way of salvation”—Very well! you are saved there and then. Believing God’s testimony, relying on God’s Son, accepting God’s way of salvation—that is the faith that saves the soul. That is not a faith which says, “I am saved because I believe I am.” That may be a lie. It is not a faith that says, “I feel so happy, and therefore I am saved.” There are a great many that feel very happy indeed that will be lost. But it is a faith that goes upon principles, upon truth written in Scripture, not upon excitement nor upon feelings. God gives Christ to save men, and Christ saves all who trust him. I do trust him, therefore he saves me. I believe God gave me that trust; therefore I give all the glory to God, and having no works to boast, I confess that I am saved through what Jesus did on my behalf. That is my first direction for your first dilemma.

Fresh questions are mooted. I want to answer a few objections against this being the way of salvation.

Let me ask you, however, what on earth is the good of your objecting at all? If God has made this to be the way of salvation, your best plan is to accept it. What good will your objections do? “Can I not do as I will with my own?” would be God’s response to your impertinence. As surely as that book is God’s word so surely are we taught there that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned.” Now it is no use your kicking against it. There it stands, and it will not be altered for you. Were this city starving, and a man of wealth were to bring in bread and distribute it, any regulations he chose to make for the distribution surely he would have a right to enforce. Nobody ought to cavil at it. God has made and fixed this fast and firm, that other salvation there is none. “There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.” Man, do not object. We sometimes say to boys who go out to business, and do not like the work, “It is no use quarrelling with your bread and butter.” Surely the opportune supply of actual necessities ought to silence every murmur. What profit, I prithee, sir, canst thou expect to come of cavilling at God’s covenant, or challenging the propriety of his salvation, which he hath prepared before the face of all people? God has fixed it. He will not alter the thing that hath gone out of his mouth. Leave your objections for something else. Write to the newspapers if you please about some public grievance; but to impugn with indignation, or bemoan with bitter complaints, God’s way of salvation, must be the most unprofitable, not to say the most impertinent and wicked way of wasting time. It is alleged that when we tell men to believe in Jesus, and they will be saved, they will go on

in sin : they will despise good works ; they will perhaps grow immoral. The answer is this. *Do they ? Do they ?* I quoted a very homely proverb just now. I will quote another quite as homely. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." And truly the proof of the doctrine is in the practical result. Do the people that believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, renouncing all trust in their good works, plunge deeper into sin and make this a reason for licentiousness ? Answer honestly. Turn to the page of history, and see on a large scale the aspect of society. What think ye to wit of the cavaliers of King Charles's day ? They certainly were no believers in justification by faith. I do not know exactly what they did believe in. But I suppose had there been a preacher of good works and the whole duty of man, who adorned moral essays with graces of language, sparklings of wit, and aphorisms from heathen authors, these gallant gentlemen would have listened to the Court preacher with a languid satisfaction, and gone home to their ladies to tell what a profitable sermon they had heard. But where do you look for social virtue among men, holy living before God, and noble sacrifices for the public good ? Why, amongst your bluff Puritans, amongst the rough men that would do anything but sin, who feared no man's face in the day of battle, but who feared God in the sanctities of their private chambers, and the secret recesses of their own hearts ? Around Cromwell's camp-fires at night there may be many disputes about doctrines but never a dispute about this question—that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ. All the world knows that the men who cry up good works have not got any stock in hand, or even a sample to show, while those who preach up faith in Jesus Christ are themselves the very people whose biographies will bear to be written, and who do exhibit the very works which this doctrine is supposed to destroy. Judge, therefore, by facts.

But if the doctrine of faith be such a wonderfully easy way of salvation, and when it is accepted men just go on as they did before ; why do not all the licentious people receive it ? Why do not you hear in the theatre and the saloon the song sung—

"I do believe—I will believe—
That Jesus died for me" ?

If free grace be such a potent factor in the merchandise of free living, why not introduce it more freely among your harlots ? Why does it not find favour among the gay and giddy, the fast and frivolous ? Do men do that ? Nay : but the world knows that our faith will not blend with their filth. If any man among you would like to come up here and say, "I, for one, believe in Jesus Christ, and yet I lead a licentious life," he would be scouted as a hypocrite among the sensuous and the Sybarites. It is all very well to suborn false witnesses who say that it leads to that. You know it does not. The licentious are the last persons to talk about the atonement of Jesus Christ. Yet if it were so, did the expiation of Christ extenuate in ever so small a degree the Epicureanism of the world, it would surely be one of the doctrines which the self-indulgent would seize upon with the greatest avidity. No, sir, the man that lives in vice and violates every precept of the Decalogue is just the man to make conscience of going on Good

Friday to his church ; there he takes the sacrament, and believes that he somehow or other gets absolution thereby. At your Agricultural Hall services and noon-day prayer-meetings they will sneer, because it is encouraging hypocrisy instead of putting down immorality, and so on. Yes, we know where the talk comes from—from men who *lack* a morality of their own. If they were to look at their true lives it would suffice.

Again. Suppose we were to change the system of preaching, and preach up that men were to be saved by good works—entirely by what they did. You say, "That would set them working." Perhaps it would, or perhaps it would not—most likely the latter, for as a general rule it never has produced much result. Dr. Chalmers's experience was that he preached morality till he had not any moral people left, and he did not see anybody converted to Jesus Christ. I believe you may preach against sin, if you do not at the same time proclaim the way of salvation, till you preclude shame, and leave men accusing one another and excusing themselves. Your model sermons would become monstrous travesties of rectitude. In plain English, you would be preaching up selfishness. You say to these people, "Do this, that you may be saved." What is, then, to be the object of their life? Self-salvation. That is the one thing they are to live for—that they may somehow merit heaven. And it is a doctrine that will pay extremely well. If you happen to be a priest, and want something that will really remunerate you for your services, I do not know anything better, if you tell them that they will get to heaven by their benevolent actions, their deeds of charity, and especially their alms to the church, and remind them especially that in their departing moments it will be extremely useful to leave a large sum of money for the benefit of the church and much to the advantage of their souls. Oh, it is an excellent plan of picking their pockets. If men give in that way, they are giving to God, they say. Not a bit of it! They are giving to themselves—seeking their own salvation. It is a pure system of selfishness from beginning to end, and he that lives to save himself is living with a mean purpose. I wonder how he can look himself in the face, and say, "God made me ; and yet I am not living to his glory, but I am living to save myself." I say, sir, that if your system could be worked out, and produce the best possible effect that could come of it, it would only be to reduce mankind into a race of self-seeking men, seeking, indeed, self in a very fine garb, but still seeking self. "How about faith?" say you. Why, faith in Jesus Christ saves us from self. We believe in him, and we are saved from that day, for we live not for self-salvation. We are saved, and now, out of love to him who saved us, we live unto his praise and glory, this being our grand motive—that we might glorify him, not seeking a reward, but "As thou hast loved me, O ever loving Lord, so would I love thee!" This is something better than selfishness. This is, in fact, salvation from self, which is no mean part of salvation from our sins.

Push the matter still closer home. I would like to ask another question. You say that to tell a big black sinner that God forgives him on the spot when he believes in Jesus is to encourage him in sin. Come, and defend your hypothesis. Suppose that the man is led to

believe that God has forgiven him, what will be the effect upon him? Think a little. Have you never heard of the effect of kindness upon men? Do you not believe in it? Some men are all for whips and chains. Flog them well; give them a term of penal servitude; transport them. That is the law, and it is supposed to be capable of working a wonderful reformation in their characters. But have you never heard of the effect of kindness? I will tell you a story of a quaker. Isaac Hopper was in the streets of Philadelphia, and he heard a black waiter swearing awfully. This black waiter waited upon him in the hotel, and he swore there. "Well," said Hopper, "I must stop this man's swearing." So he brought him up (it is many years ago) before the Philadelphian court, which then had a law that anybody who cursed God should be fined. So Cain got fined. Some years afterwards Hopper was in Philadelphia, and he saw Cain, not in the white cravat of the waiter, but in rags. He had evidently been living a life of drunkenness. Now Hopper had desired this man's good, so he said to the man, "Cain, thou hast not much improved since I saw thee last." No, he had not, and he had some bad ways. Hopper asked him if he did not remember when he had him brought before the Philadelphian court and fined for using bad language. Remember it? He thought he did remember it. He should never forget the nasty trick that the Quaker had played him. "Now," said he, "friend Cain, I meant thy good. I really did desire thy good." Cain said, "And I cursed at you dreadfully afterwards." So Hopper put his hand into his pocket with all the calculation of business, and he said, "Friend Cain, thou wast fined so much, and the interest upon it since then is so much. I can assure thee I only meant thy good, and now I give thee this back." Then he proceeded to speak to him very kindly till the big tears stood in Cain's eyes. And Cain said, "After all, Mr. Hopper, there is something better in the world than I thought there was:" and it was the means of reclaiming the man. The fining did not do him good, as we generally believe it does on those of whom we speak as "worthless characters." Kindness—that it was which set him right. A more remarkable case was that of Penel, the master of the lunatic asylum in Paris, in the days of the convention. There were hundreds of people pinned to the floor, and Penel sued the convention that they would allow him to set them loose. He proposed to let loose fifty furious savages first. Caithon, the president, said, "I will come down to-morrow and see these creatures, and if thou art concealing any of the enemies of the republic, death to thee at the guillotine." And when Caithon went down they howled at him, like so many wild beasts; and he said, "I think thou art maddest of all of them; but you may do as you like, though I am sure you will be the victim of it." There was one English captain in the house who had been chained there forty years—chained down to the ground, because he had got one of his hands loose and had killed a keeper—a savage, morose beast of the worst kind that could be. Penel went to him, and he said, "Captain, if I set you free would you act like a rational being?" "Ah, that I would," said the man, "but you are all afraid of me—all of you." "No, I am not," said Penel, "I have got these men here who could manage you very well, but I will trust you if you behave yourself

rationally." Oh, he would behave very well, that he would—the very man who killed his keeper. And when his chains were taken from him he strove to rise, poor man, but for many minutes he could not stand, because he had been chained down so long. At last he got up and looked up at the sky and could only say, "Beautiful! beautiful! beautiful!" But he became not only calm, quiet, and tractable, but made himself a sort of superintendent over the rest. I believe Penel was the means of bringing all the poor creatures who had been let loose back to sober reason, and something like reasoning obedience of the laws under which they lived, simply by kindness. And has that been done by madmen? Why, it has been done by some of us, who were worse than mad—mad with sin. We have trusted them, forgiven them, been kind to them, and conquered them. And do you not believe if the everlasting God says to a sinner, "Now, you will destroy yourself if you go on: I am angry with your sin; but though I hate your sin, I do not hate you: I have laid your sin on Christ: believe it," and the man believes it—will he rise up to be worse than he was before? Human nature is bad enough, but this is not the way of man after all. The cords of love do hold us, and the bands of a man do restrain us. I will ask you, sir, that make the objection, if you could be met on the Tabernacle steps to-night or at your own door by an angel, who should say to you, "I have brought you this scroll fresh from the hands of the Eternal God: on it is written, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee; I have bought thee with my precious blood: thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven,'"—sir, would the effect of that upon you be to make you live a worse life than you did before? You would be a devil—worse than a devil—if such were to be the consequence. But it could not be so. "I feel I must begin a new life,"—that is what I want you to feel. And, therefore, do I preach to you to-night, not about an angel with a scroll, but as a man like yourself, with the Christ-inspired volume before me. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall have pardon for the past, and, what is equal to it, you shall, with the reception of that pardon, find a change come over your nature which shall inspire you with nobler purposes, and make you another man than you are at present. I might thus continue to speak; but I refrain. If the objection is not driven away by my feeble sentences, may God drive it away by his mighty Spirit.

Now my closing effort shall be to show the comparative power of faith. Paul says that faith works. It worketh by love,—not by dread or fear, but by love. Oh, blessed machinery this! Love shall be the great communicator—the great band which connects the mighty engine of faith with our lives—faith which works by love.

Do you ask how doth faith work by love? Why, when a man believes God's testimony, and sees that, notwithstanding all his offences, God loves him, and has provided his own dear Son to be ransom for him, the man says, "My views of God are changed. I never understood that God was like this. I thought, surely, that he was very angry with me, that I should be utterly destroyed, and that without remedy. Has God given me his only-begotten Son, and did

that only-begotten Son bear for me what I ought to have borne? Then I cannot be his enemy. It was ignorance of what he is that made me indifferent to him; my indifference begat insolence, and that made me oppose him. Love has come into my soul now, and I see who God is. God is love. God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all." The man's mind is by that very fact changed in regard to God. And having effected this revolution of feeling you have gone a long way towards changing the man's actual life. The next step after that is repentance. The man says, "Well, I struggled against a mighty God who had made laws which I have broken, and only knew that he would punish me. I dared the worst. I felt case-hardened. I said, 'I will go on, for there is no hope;' but now I perceive that God has never done anything towards me for which I should hate him. He has never viewed me in a malicious spirit, but he has always regarded me with an eye to my good. Then I hate myself to think that I should have offended him. Wretch that I am, that I should have lived forty years regardless of one who has never forgotten me a single day. Wretch that I am, that I should have taken that name in vain which is a name above every name; the name that is to be my everlasting joy. O, my Father, my Father, how could it be that I, thy child, should be thy foe? My Saviour, my bleeding Saviour, how was it that I could revile thy people, despise thy cross, and trample on thy blood? I grieve, for I have grieved thee. I hate the sins that made thee mourn. Now I see that thou forgivest; and I thank thee." There is a change, you see, of the view the man takes of God, and then a change in the views which he takes of his own actions, and he repents in dust and ashes when he discovers the love of God.

Ay, and faith works by love yet farther, for faith leads to the foot of the cross, and says, "Look there;" and the soul stands and looks up; and as it looks it lives, and as it lives it loves, and as it loves it weeps, and as it weeps it gazes upon Christ again and says, "Yes, he is the Son of God, and yet the greatest sufferer that ever lived. He was offended, yet he died. He it is whose laws were broken; yet the chastisement of our peace was upon him. And as we look into those wounds and read those griefs, and as our eyes begin to penetrate within his flesh to see the heartbreakings which he endured, as the ear catches the sound of "Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani," and as our heart gazes into the side and sees his heart that was broken, we begin to love and weep, and love and weep again. And then we say to ourselves, "What should I do for him who died to save my wretched soul?" Sin becomes hateful, and we ask, "How can I please him? How can I serve him?" Then we wish we could die for him, and as he does not ask us to do that, we pray that we may live for him. Love to him becomes the strongest incentive, the mightiest impulse, the motive power that sways our entire being. Oh, I wish you felt it to be so in your own souls. It has been so in some of us; and now henceforth to us to live is Christ. Now for the love we bear to his name, Christ has become the great object of our being.

And so faith, leading us by the way of gratitude up to the standpoint of love begets in us a desire to please him, and also a desire to

imitate him ; for love, somehow, always grows like its object. You cannot love a thing without becoming something like it, in proportion to the force of love ; and just in proportion as you love Jesus you must get like him. Oh, objector, would it hurt the world if men were to grow like Christ ? Whatever you may think about the religion we have taken from his lips, I know you cannot speak against the life which he lived. And if faith in him will make men like him—and it has made them like him, and is making them like him every day—it cannot be an evil and a licentious thing. It must, in fact, be the greatest power for morality, the greatest strengthener of social law and order, and the very best principle a patriot might desire to spread throughout the nation in which he lives. Talk no more about morality, I pray you. “Thou bleeding Lamb, the best morality is love to thee ;” and where is it but in those who trust thee with their soul, their all ?

You will always find that those who thus, out of gratitude, desire to imitate Christ, inevitably become lovers of their fellow-men. When we imitate Christ we cannot be men-haters. Timon is not Christ, but the very antipodes of Christ. Our blessed Lord and Master is no man-hater. When I listen to a cynic I know that Christ is not of his school. When I read the satire sharp and cutting, when I have heard men spoken of in terms which make them to be brutes—at least a few dozen generations back—I know that that doctrine was not learned of Christ. My Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, was the poor man’s friend. Never a syllable fell from his lips which would make a tyrant feel at ease in his despotism. Never did he utter a syllable that would make the oppressive master feel that he had any right to tread down his workmen. Never did he utter a line that would make the workman feel that he had a right to be envious of those who possess more talents or enjoy higher privileges than he had. His teaching was justice, and his life was love. If you ask me for a man in all respects, such a man as one would wish all men to be with whom we dwell, I can only commend you to the person and character of my Lord ; and if you are to become imitators of him, the husband will be the kindest husband and the most loving of fathers ; the mother will be the most tender and amiable of mothers and of wives. If you have been forgiven by Christ, and so love him mightily and imitate him diligently—well, you will be such men and women that no pastor need be ashamed to say, “They belong to my flock ;” and no fellow Christians will need be ashamed to own you as one of their fraternity. Oh, beloved, there is growing up in this country, I fear, more and more a feeling of alienation the one from the other. I cannot speak as some do of “the good old times,” for I believe the times were never so old as they are now, and never so good. But I do grieve to see that different classes are arrayed against each other. It will augur ill for our country if this jealousy goes on, for rivalries provoke resentments. God has given us pre-eminence among the sons of men in many respects ; and if the house would not be divided against itself it would prosper. If we will every one resolve to love his neighbour as himself, and to seek his brother’s good, each one seeking and satisfied with that which is just and equal, whether

occupying the higher or the lower or the middle place, from how many districts manifold distractions would be averted ! Yea, but if we will each one do more, and be generous and kind and loving, we shall be benefactors indeed, and bless our country. I do not know by what process we can be brought to do this so surely, and so reasonably, as by our believing in Jesus Christ. Feeling gratitude and love to him, then imitating him, and then becoming like him, we shall verify, in our triumph over the world, the virtue of that faith whereby alone the victory can be won.

One other remark. If you would have faith in Christ as the ground of justification, do not mix up this gift in your thoughts with anything else that has nothing at all to do with it. "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision." These outward distinctions are of no consequence. They might have made a great difference at another time, and under other circumstances ; but "henceforth know we no man after the flesh." . . . "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold all things are become new." Now, there may be, and most likely there are, not a few of my hearers who are enquiring the way of salvation, but cannot understand it, because they distract themselves with thoughts about themselves that are totally irrelevant. Methinks I can read the thought which is just now passing through the minds of many of you. "Oh," say you, "I should like a few minutes conversation with the pastor !" And why ? Have you any question to ask ? Is there any matter I have failed to make plain ? Do you not understand, one and all of you, that, entirely irrespective of anything about your birth, your bringing up, or your business, the simple direction of the gospel is, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Suppose I listened to you, it would not be very difficult for me to conjecture what every one would have to say. "Well," says one, "I wanted to tell you, sir, that I was trained to the Established Church, and christened before I was three months old." That avails nothing. "Alas, sir !" says another, "you could not imagine the disadvantages of my childhood. My parents were no church-goers. They never had me sprinkled or dedicated, or anything else. I was reared like a heathen." Well, that is no detriment ; it disavails you nothing. "Why, sir," says one, "I could repeat the Catechism and I knew by heart all the collects before I was four years old." "Alas !" says another, "I *never* was taught anything." Know assuredly, my friends, that there is but one salvation for white men, or black men, for pharisees or publicans. When you believe in Jesus, you are born again. Every trace of your former self is wiped out. I would that ye counted yourselves dead and buried, that ye might live the new life, and say with the apostle, "The life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God."

Some of you have been converted during the last few weeks. I hope a good many of you have. Some of you have been converted to God in this place. There are here present, I doubt not, those who have been brought to believe in Christ under various agencies piously and prayerfully conducted at this time in our metropolis. We greet you cordially. Our adversaries watch you narrowly. They say, "Well, but

will they stand? Will they last?" "Is their conversion worth anything?" Now, I do pray you who profess to have found Christ, do not make any sham of it. Do let it be salvation from sin that you have got. Salvation from hell—is that what you want? That is not the salvation you ought to try after. It is salvation from sin. That will bring salvation from hell. You know every thief would like to get salvation from going to prison, and that would not be of any particular use to him. The salvation that is worth having is the salvation from thieving any more. Mr. Thief, if you get that you will get salvation from prison too. Salvation from hell is not the matter, but salvation from sinning. Now let us see how you live, you converts. You go home, sir, and growl at your wife; you go home, madam, to be snappish with your servant; you go home, housemaid, to be slovenly over your duty; you go hence, working man, resolved to give half a day's work for a whole day's wage; you go home, master, to act the tyrant over your men. Well; you have been converted, have you? I pray God undo such a conversion, and begin again with you. There are lots of people who need to be *unconverted* before they are converted—to have the rubbish they have built up themselves pulled down before Christ can begin. Suppose you have some freehold ground, and it has an old remarkable building on it. With a new edifice in view, you must need clear away every vestige of the former house. There are plenty of people who have a good-for-nothing conversion that wants sweeping away before God can do anything with them. Do pray to the Lord in this way—"Lord, I beseech thee save me from my sin." Let me have a perfect faith which works, not a faith that sends me to sleep, not a faith that gives me a dose of opium and says, "There, your conscience was like an aching tooth, and would not stop aching; but I have stopped it." Now, ask the Lord to extract that which causes pain—to take away that which causes the mischief; not to give you quietness for a time. Ask for a right spirit and a new heart. Remember, you must be born again. Though it is quite true as we say and sing, "Only believe and you shall be saved," yet if that "only believing" is of a sort which merely asserts without intelligence of the mind, without emotion of the heart, there is nothing in it. It leaves you what you were before, it is not the faith pure and simple that will save your soul. Evidently it will not save you, for it has left you still slaves to your sin. True, real, childlike faith in Jesus Christ saves us, because it works by love. The Lord grant you to possess this precious prize which we persistently preach—the faith which worketh by love.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans iii.,
from verse 20.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—351, 544, 406,

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"LOVEST THOU ME?"

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 27TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"—John xxi. 16.

THIS is a very short and simple text, and some would think it very easy to say all that can be said upon it, but indeed it is a very large text, and too full of meaning for me to attempt to expound it all. The words are few, but the thoughts suggested are very many; there are subtle meanings, too, in the original Greek well worth considering, and allusions which deserve to be followed out. I intend at this time to confine myself to one point, and to ask your consideration of one thought only. May the Spirit of God prepare our hearts for our meditation, and impress the truth upon them. My one point is this; *our Lord asked Peter whether he had a love to his person.* The inquiry is not concerning his love to the kingdom of God, or the people of God, but it begins and ends with his love to the Son of God. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou *me*?" He does not say, "Dost thou now perceive the prudence of my warnings when I bade thee watch and pray? Simon, son of Jonas, wilt thou henceforth cease from thy self-confidence, and take heed to my admonitions?" It is not even, "Do you now believe my doctrines? Do you not trust in one whom the other day you denied?" Neither is it asked, "Are you pleased with my precepts? Are you a believer in my claims? Will you still confess me to be the Son of the Highest?" No, these matters are not brought under question, but the one inquiry is, "Lovest thou me? Hast thou a personal attachment for me, to my very self?" He calls him by his old, unconverted name, Simon, son of Jonas, to remind him of what grace had done for him, and then he asks only about his love. The question deals with *personal attachment to a personal Christ*, and that is my sole subject.

Observe that our ever wise and tender Saviour questioned Peter about his love in plain set terms. There was no beating about the bush, he went at once to the point, for it is not a matter about which

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ambiguity and doubt can be endured. As the physician feels his patient's pulse to judge his heart, so the Lord Jesus tested at once the pulse of Peter's soul. He did not say, "Simon, son of Jonas, dost thou repent of thy folly?" Repentance is a very blessed grace, and very needful, but it was wiser to look at once to Peter's love, because it is quite certain that if a disciple loves his master he will deeply grieve for ever having denied him. The Lord does not even ask his follower as to his faith, which might well have been put under question, for he had with oaths said, "I know not the man." It would have been a highly important question, but it was answered when Peter avowed his love, for he who loves believes, and no man can love a Saviour in whom he does not believe. The Lord left every other point out of consideration, or perhaps I ought rather to say concentrated every other point into this one inquiry—"Lovest thou me?" Learn from this fact that one thing is needful; love to Jesus is the chief, the vital point to look to.

This question the Lord asked three times, as if to show that it is of the first, of the second, and of the third importance; as if it comprised all else, and therefore he would again, and again, and again insist upon it, as orators dwell with repetitions and emphatic sentences upon topics which they would urge home upon their auditors. This nail was meant to be well fastened, for it is smitten on the head with blow after blow. With unvarying tone and look the Lord enquired, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" It shows what weight our Saviour attached to the matter of his love, that he asked him about *that*, about *that only*, and about *that three times over*. When you are examining yourselves look mainly to your hearts, and make thorough inquisition into your love. Is Jesus really loved by you? Have you a deep attachment to his person? Whatever else you trifle with, be earnest here.

Remember that the Lord Jesus himself asked the question, and he asked it until he grieved Peter. So long as he was but recognised as a disciple Peter must have felt ready to receive the severest possible rebuke, and think himself gently done by; therefore it was not easy to grieve him. Our Lord also was slow at all times to cause pain to any true heart; yet on this occasion, for wise reasons, he reiterated his inquiry till he touched Peter's unhealed wounds and made them smart. Had he not made his Master's heart bleed, and was it not fit that he should feel heart-wounds himself? A threefold denial demanded a threefold confession, and the grief he had caused was fitly brought to his memory by the grief he felt. Now, this morning, if I press this question until I grieve some of you, till I grieve myself also, I shall not be censurable for having done so. To comfort you would be a good work, but sometimes it may be better to grieve you. Not always is sweet food the best thing we can bring you, bitter medicine is sometimes more requisite. I shall not have pushed the question beyond its legitimate sphere if I should so present it as to stir your hearts even to anguish. True love has more or less of pain about it; only the mere pretender passes through the world without anxious inquiry and heart-searching. Better far that you should be grieved to-day, and be found right at last, than that you should presumptuously feel yourselves secure, and be deceivers in the end.

We remarked that the question was put by our Lord himself. What if the Lord Jesus should meet you to-day, and should say to each one of you, "Lovest thou me?" If the question came at the end of one of our sermons, or just as we had done teaching, I should not wonder if it startled us. Found, as we are, in his house, having just sung sweet hymns in his honour, having united in prayer, and heartily joined in his worship, it would seem strange to be questioned as to our love to him, and yet it would not be unnecessary. Imagine, then, that your Lord has found you quite alone, and is standing before you; think of him touching you with his hand, and gently enquiring, "After all, lovest thou me?" How would you feel under such a question? Would you not be struck with it, and perhaps with shame begin to tremble and think over a dozen reasons why such a searching question was suggested to you just now. And if the Lord were to repeat it three times, and each time put it distinctly to you, and to you only, would you not feel great searchings of heart? Yet would I have you so receive the question. Let it come to you now as from Jesus. Forget that it is spoken by the minister, or written in the text. Hear it only as spoken by Jesus, by that same Jesus who has redeemed you from death and hell by his most precious blood. He addresses it to you rather than to others,—is there not a cause? Singling you out of the company, he gazes on you fixedly, and says, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest *thou* me?"—you know why there is such cause to question you. Answer for yourself alone, for he puts the enquiry only to you. Never mind Nathanael now, nor Thomas, nor the two sons of Zebedee—"Lovest *thou* me? Really, truly does thy heart beat true towards Jesus of Nazareth? Come, Peter, yes or no? Thou sayest 'Yes,' but is it so? Is it so? Is it so?" I want the enquiry to come to my own soul and to yours this morning, as if Jesus really stood before each one of us, and again said, "Lovest thou me?" May the Lord grant us grace to make solemn enquiry as to this matter, to bear honest witness, and to give a true deliverance, which shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

I. Our first observation shall be this—LOVE TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST MAY BE ABSENT FROM OUR BOSOMS. Unhappy thought, and yet most certainly true! Even in *our* hearts there may be no love to Christ! I know of nothing which can screen any one of us from the necessity of the question. Our gifts and apparent graces may prevent our fellow creatures questioning us, but nothing should prevent our questioning ourselves, for certainly there is nothing which will prevent the Lord himself from putting the enquiry to us.

No outward religiousness renders this enquiry needless. Are we professors of religion, are we very constant in attending to outward forms of worship? Do we enter very heartily into all the public exercises of God's house? Yes, but there are thousands who do that, hundreds of thousands who do that every Lord's-day, and yet they do not love Christ! My brethren, are not multitudes wrapped up in forms and ceremonies? If the service pleases the eye and the ear are they not quite content? Love to the person of Christ has not occurred to the mass of avowed worshippers of Jesus. We know others to whom the end-all and be-all of religion is an orthodox statement of doctrine. So long as the preaching is

according to the confession of faith, and every word and act is piously correct, they are well pleased ; but no love to Jesus ever stirs their bosoms ; religion to them is not an exercise of the heart at all—it is mere brain work, and hardly that. They know nothing of the living soul going out towards a living person, a bleeding heart knit to another bleeding heart, a life subsisting on another life and enamoured of it. We know brethren who carry this very far, and if the preacher differs from them in the merest shade, they are overwhelmed with pious horror at his unsoundness, and they cannot hear him again : even if he preach Christ most precious in all the rest of his discourse, it is nothing, because he cannot sound their “Shibboleth.” What is orthodoxy without love, but a catacomb to bury dead religion in. It is a cage without a bird ; the gaunt skeleton of a man out of which the life has fled. I am afraid that the general current of church life runs too much towards externals, and too little towards deep burning love to the person of Christ. If you preach much about emotional religion, and the heart-work of godliness, cold-blooded professors label you as rather mystical, and begin to talk of Madame Guyon and the danger of the Quietist school of religion. We would not mind having a little spice of that, even if we were blamed for it, for after all the realizing of Christ is the grand thing. The faith which is most blessed is faith which deals most fully with the person of Jesus Christ, the truest repentance is that which weeps at a sight of his wounds, and the love which is most sweet is love to the adorable person of the Well-beloved. I look upon the doctrines of grace as my Lord’s garments, and they smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. I look upon his precepts as his sceptre, and it is a rod tipped with silver ; and I delight to touch it and find comfort in its power. I look upon the gospel ordinances as the throne upon which he sits, and I delight in that throne of ivory overlaid with pure gold ; but oh, his person is sweeter than his garments, dearer than his sceptre, more glorious than his throne ; he himself is altogether lovely, and to love HIM is the very heart’s core of true religion. But perhaps you may not love HIM after all. You may have all the externals of outward religiousness, and yet the secret of the Lord may not be with you. It will be vain to reverence the Sabbath if you forget the Lord of the Sabbath, vain to love the sanctuary but not the Great High Priest, vain to love the wedding-feast but not the Bridegroom. Do you love HIM ? that is the question. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ?”

Nor, brethren, would the highest office in the church render it unnecessary to ask the question. Peter was an apostle, and not a whit behind the very chief of them. In some respects he was a foundation stone of the church, and yet it was needful to say to him, “Lovest thou me ?” For there was once an apostle who did not love the Lord ; there was an apostle who coveted twenty pieces of silver,—a goodly price was that at which he sold his Master. The name of Judas should sound the death-knell of all presumptuous confidence in our official standing. We may stand very high in the church and yet fall to our destruction. Our names may be in the list of religious leaders and yet they may not be written in the Lamb’s book of life. So, my brother minister, deacon,

or elder, it is needful to put to ourselves the question, "Lovest thou the Lord?"

The enjoyment of the greatest Christian privileges does not render this question unnecessary. Peter and James and John were the three most favoured of all the apostles: they witnessed certain of our Lord's miracles which were done in secret, and beheld of no other human eyes. They beheld him on the mount of transfiguration in all his glory, and they saw him in the garden of Gethsemane in all his agony, and yet, though thus favoured, their Lord felt it needful to ask of their leader, "Lovest thou me?" O my brother, you have had high enjoyments, you have been on Tabor, illuminated with its transporting light, and you have also had fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, or at any rate you think you have. You are familiar alike with inward agonies and spiritual joys: you have been the familiar of the Lord and eaten bread with him, and yet remember there was one who did this and yet lifted up his heel against him, and therefore it is needful to say to you, my brother, "Lovest thou the Lord?" Dost thou really love him after all? for it is not certain that thou dost so because of what thou hast seen and enjoyed. It is easy to invent a remarkable experience, but the one thing needful is a loving heart. Take heed that ye have this.

Nor, my dear brethren, does the greatest warmth of zeal prevent the necessity of this question. Peter was a red-hot disciple. How ready he was both to do and to dare for his Master. How impetuously he cried when he was on the lake of Galilee, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water." What daring! What faith! What vehement zeal! And here, too, in the narrative before us, when the Lord was by that selfsame sea of Tiberias, Peter, in his headlong zeal, cannot wait until the boat touches the shore, but he girds on his fisher's coat and plunges in to meet the Master whom he loves; and yet, with that headlong zeal before him, the Lord says, "Lovest thou me?" Yes, young man, you are earnest in the Sunday-school, you have sought the conversion of the little ones and succeeded above many; you encourage others and give impetus to every movement in which you engage: and yet you need to enquire whether you do in very deed love the Lord or no. Perhaps, my dear brother, you stand up in the corners of the streets, and face the ungodly throng and delight to talk of Jesus, whether men oppose or no; yet are you sure you love Jesus? My sister, you visit the poor and care for the needy, you lay yourself out to do good to young people, and are full of warmth in all things which concern the Redeemer's cause. We admire you, and hope your zeal will never grow less; but for all that, even to you must the question be put, "Lovest thou the Lord Jesus?" For there is a zeal which is fed by regard to the opinions of others, and sustained by a wish to be thought earnest and useful; there is a zeal which is rather the warmth of nature than the holy fire of grace: this zeal has enabled many to do great things, and yet, when they have done all, they have been as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, because they did not love Jesus Christ. The most zealous actions, though they naturally lead us to hope that those who perform them are lovers of Jesus, are not conclusive

evidence thereof, and therefore we must still enquire, "Lovest thou the Lord?"

Ay, dear friends, and I will go a little further; *the greatest self-denial does not prove it*. Peter could say, "Lord, we have left all and followed thee." Though it was not very much, yet it was all Peter had, and he had left it all for the good cause, without having gained any earthly good in return. He had been frequently abused and reproached, for Jesus' sake, and he expected to be reproached still more, yet was he loyal, and willing to suffer to the end: yet the Lord, knowing all that Peter had sacrificed for his sake, nevertheless said to him, "Lovest thou me?" For sadly, strangely true it is, that men have made considerable sacrifices to become professed Christians and yet have not had the root of the matter in them. Some have even been put into prison for the truth, and yet have not been sincere Christians, and it is not for us to say, but it is to be feared that in the martyr days some have given their bodies to be burned, yet because they had not love, it profited them nothing. Love is essential. Nothing can compensate for its absence. And yet this precious thing may not be in your hearts! O God, I tremble as I remember that perhaps it is not in mine. Let each one hear the question "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

I must press the point still a little further. It is often necessary for us to put this question, because there are other points of religion besides the emotional. Man is not all heart, he has a brain, and the brain is to be consecrated and sanctified. It is, therefore, right that we should study the Word of God and become well instructed scribes in the kingdom of heaven. Peter went to college three years, with Jesus Christ for a tutor, and he learned a great deal, as who would not from so great a teacher? But after he had been through his course, his Master, before he sent him to his life-work, felt it needful to inquire, "Lovest thou me?" Brother, you may turn over the pages of your book, you may digest doctrine after doctrine, you may take up theological propositions and problems, and you may labour to solve this difficulty and expound that text, and meet the other question, till, somehow or other, the heart grows as dry as the leaves of the volume, and the book-worm feeds on the soul as well as the paper, eating its way into the spirit. It is, therefore, a healthy thing for the Lord to come into the study and close the book, and say to the student, "Sit still a while, and let me ask thee, 'Lovest thou me?' I am better than all books and studies: hast thou a warm, human, living love to me?" I hope many of you are very diligent students—if you teach in the Sunday-school you ought to be, if you preach in the streets or in cottage meetings you ought to be. How shall you fill others if you are not full yourselves? But at the same time look most of all to the condition of your heart towards Christ. To know is good, but to love is better. If thou wilt study, thou canst solve all problems; yet, if thou lovest not, thou hast failed to comprehend the mystery of mysteries, and to know the most excellent of sciences. Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up. Look well, then, to the question, "Lovest thou me?" Much of Christian life also ought to be spent in active labour. We are to be up and doing. If there was anything to do, Peter was the man to do it. He had gone forth to preach the

gospel, and even the devils had been subject to him; Peter had wrought marvels in Jesus' name, and he was ordained to work yet greater wonders. Yet, despite all that Peter had done, his love needed to be examined. Even though those feet of Peter's had walked the sea, which no man's feet had done besides, yet Peter must be asked, "Lovest thou me?" He had just dragged that huge net to the shore with all that host of fishes, a hundred and fifty and three. With great skill and mighty effort he had drawn the whole shoal on shore, yet this did not prove his love. There are preachers of the gospel among us who have dragged a full net to shore, the great fishes have been many; they have been great and successful workers, but this does not prevent its being needful for the Lord to examine them as to their hearts. He bids them put by their nets for awhile and commune with him. Shut up the church book; fold up the roll of membership and have done counting your fishes. Come into your chamber apart. Jesus means to ask you something. "In my name you have cast out devils, but did you love me? You cast the net on the right side of the ship, as I told you, but did you love me? You drew to shore that shoal of fishes, but did you love *me*?" Brethren, this is the solemn fear, "Lest after having preached to others I myself should be a castaway." Lest after bringing others to Jesus, and serving God well in the school, or in some other sphere, you should, nevertheless, make a dead failure of it, because you have not loved Jesus himself. I must press the question again and again, and I do pray the Holy Spirit to let its power be felt by every one of us.

Possibly we may have been called to contend earnestly for the faith, and we may have been battling with the King's enemies on this side and on that, and standing up for the truth even as for dear life. It is well to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, for this age wants men who are not afraid to bear reproach for speaking out the truth, with strong, stern words; but to this spirit it is more than ever important that the question should come, "Lovest thou me?" A man may be a very firm Protestant, but may not love Christ; he may be a very earnest advocate of divine truth, but he may not love him who is the truth itself; he may maintain Scriptural views as to baptism, and yet he may never have been baptised into Christ. A man may be a staunch Nonconformist, and may see all the evils against which Nonconformity is a protest, but still he may be conformed to the world, and be lost notwithstanding all his dissent. It is a grand thing for every Christian warrior to look well to this breastplate, and to see that he can promptly reply to the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Putting all together, let me say to you,—Beloved, however eminent you may be in the church of God, and however distinguished for services or for suffering, yet do not evade this question. Bare your bosoms to the inspection of your Lord. Answer him with humble boldness while he says to you again and again, even till he grieves you, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

II. We will now turn to a second head. **WE MUST LOVE THE PERSON OF CHRIST, OR ALL OUR PAST PROFESSIONS HAVE BEEN A LIE.** It is not possible for that man to be a Christian who does not love Christ. Take the heart away, and life is impossible. Your very

first true hope of heaven came to you, if it ever did come at all, by Jesus Christ. Beloved, you heard the gospel, but the gospel apart from Christ was never good news to you; you read the Bible, but the Bible apart from a personal Christ was never anything more than a dead letter to you; you listened to many earnest entreaties, but they all fell on a deaf ear until Jesus came and compelled you to come in. The first gleam of comfort that ever entered my heart flashed from the wounds of the Redeemer; I never had a hope of being saved until I saw him hanging on the tree in agonies and blood. And because our earliest hope is bound up, not with any doctrine or preacher, but with Jesus, our all in all, therefore I am sure, even if we have only lately received our first hope, we must love Jesus, from whom it has come. Nor do we merely begin with him, for every covenant blessing we have received has been connected with his person, and could not be received apart from him. You have obtained pardon, but that pardon was through his blood. You have been clothed in righteousness, but he is the Lord your Righteousness, he is himself your glory and your beauty. You have been cleansed from many sins by conversion, but it was the water from his riven side which washed you. You have been made the child of God, but your adoption has only made you feel more akin to the Elder Brother, through whom you are made heirs of God. The blessings of the covenant are none of them separate from Christ, and cannot be enjoyed apart from him, any more than light and heat can be divided from the sun. All blessings come to us from his pierced hand, and hence if we have received them we must love him; it is not possible to have enjoyed the golden gifts of his unbounded love without being moved to love him in return. You cannot walk in the sun without being warmed, nor receive of Christ's fulness without being filled with gratitude.

Every ordinance of the Christian church since we have been converted has either been a mockery, or else we have loved Christ in it. Baptism, for instance, what is it but the mere washing away of the filth of the flesh and nothing more, unless we were buried with Christ in baptism unto death; that like as he also rose from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also might rise to newness of life? The Lord's Supper, what is it? What but a common meal for the eating of bread and the drinking of wine, unless Christ be there? But if we have come to the Lord's Supper as true men, and not as false-hearted hypocrites, we have eaten his flesh and drunk his blood, and is it possible to have done that and not to love him? It cannot be. That communion with Christ which is absolutely essential to ordinances is also sure to produce in the heart love towards him with whom we commune. And so, beloved, it has been with every approach we have made towards God in all the long years of our Christian life. Did you pray, my brother? did you really speak with God in prayer? You could not have done it except through Jesus the Mediator, and if you have spoken to God through the Mediator, you cannot remain without love to one who has been your door of access to the Father. If you have made a profession of religion, how can it be a true and honest one unless your heart burns with attachment to
 "Great Author of salvation. You have great hopes, but what are

you hoping for? Is not all your hope wrapped up in him? Do you not expect that when he shall appear you shall be like him? You are hoping to die triumphantly, but not apart from his making your dying bed soft as a pillow of down. You are hoping to rise again, but not apart from his resurrection, for he is the first fruits of the resurrection harvest. You expect to reign upon earth, but it is *with him*; you do not expect a millennium apart from the King. You expect a never-ending heaven, but that heaven is to be with Jesus where he is, and to behold his glory. Since, then, everything that you have obtained—if indeed you have received it of the Lord at all—has Christ's name stamped on it, and comes to you direct from his pierced hand, it cannot be that you have received it unless you love him. Now, when I put the question, recollect that upon your answer to it hangs this alternative—a hypocrite or a true man, a false professor or a genuine convert, a child of God or an heir of wrath. Therefore answer the enquiry, but answer it with deliberation, answer it conscientiously, as though you stood before the bar of him who now so tenderly enquires of you, but who will then speak in other tones, and look with other glances, even with those eyes which are like a flame of fire. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

III. Our third consideration is this—WE MUST HAVE LOVE TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST, OR NOTHING IS RIGHT FOR THE FUTURE. We have not finished life yet—much of pilgrimage may possibly lie before us. Now, all will go right if we love Christ, but nothing can proceed as it should do if love to Jesus be absent. For instance: Peter is called to feed the lambs and feed the sheep; but for a true pastor the first qualification is love to Christ. I gather from this incident, and I am sure I do not press it unduly, that Jesus Christ, meaning to make Peter a feeder of his lambs and sheep, acts as a trier to see whether he has the proper qualifications, and he does not so much inquire about Peter's knowledge or gifts of utterance, as about his love; for the first, second, and third qualification for a true pastor is a loving heart. Now, mark you, what is true of a pastor is true of every useful worker for Christ. Love is essential, my dear friend; you cannot work for Christ if you do not love him. "But I can teach in the school," says one. "No, not as school should be taught, without love to Jesus." "But I am connected with an interesting society, which is doing much good." "But you are not glorifying God unless you are connected with that society because you love Jesus Christ." Put down your tools, for you cannot work profitably in my Lord's vineyard unless your heart loves him: his vines had better be untrimmed than be pruned by angry hands. Let the lambs alone, sir, you will never rear them if your heart is hard and ungentle. If you do not love the Master, you will not love his work, or his servants, or the rules of his house, and we can do better without you than with you. To have an unloving worker grumbling about the Lord's house and vineyard would be distressing to the whole family. Love must be in the heart, or true service cannot come from the hands.

Then, again, perhaps suffering lies before you: and if your heart is not true to Christ, you will not be able patiently to endure for his name's sake. Before long, the time came for Peter to glorify God by

death. Peter has to be girded and to be taken whither he would not. Now Peter cannot be fit for martyrdom if he does not love Jesus. Tradition says that he was crucified with his head downwards, because he felt it too much honour to be put to death in the same position as his Lord. It may be so ; no doubt he was put to death by crucifixion, and it was his strong deep love which made him more than a conqueror. Love makes the hero. When the Spirit of God inflames love he inspires courage. See then, O believers, how much you need love for the future. Young Christian, you will have to run the gauntlet before you enter heaven. I do not mind what sphere of life you occupy, you are very particularly favoured if somebody does not mock at you, and persecute you. Between here and heaven you will be tried, and peradventure your foes will be the men of your own household. Many will watch for your halting, and even place stumbling-blocks in your way : to walk securely you will need to carry the fires of love in your heart. If you do not love Jesus intensely sin will get the mastery over you. Self-denials and humiliations which would be easy with love will be impossible without it. Rightly to work or to suffer, or to die, we must love Jesus with all our hearts.

Look you, my brethren, if we have no love for Jesus Christ's person our piety lacks the *adhesive element*, it fails in that which will help us to stick to the good old way to the end, and hold out to the end. Men often leave what they like, but never what they love ; men can deny what they merely believe as a matter of mental conviction, but they will never deny that which they feel to be true, and accept with heartfelt affection. If you are to persevere to the end, it must be in the power of love.

Love is the great *inspiring force*. Many a deed in the Christian life is impossible to everything but love. In serving Christ you come across a difficulty far too great for judgment, far too hard for prudence, and unbelief sits down and weighs and calculates, but love, mighty love, laughs at the impossibility and accomplishes it for Jesus Christ. Love breaks through troops, love leaps over walls, and hand-in-hand with faith she is all but omnipotent ; nay, through the power of God which is upon her, she can do all things for Jesus Christ her Lord. If you lack love your energy is gone ; the force which nerves the man and subdues his foes is lacking.

Without love, too, you are without the *transforming force*. Love to Christ is that which makes us like him. The eyes of love, like windows, let in the Saviour's image, and the heart of love receives it as upon a sensitive plate, until the whole nature bears its impress. You are like that which you love, or you are growing like it. If Christ be loved you are growingly becoming like him ; but without love you will never bear the image of the heavenly. O Spirit of God, with wings of love brood over us, till Christ is formed in us.

My brethren, there is one other reflection—without love to Christ we lack the *perfecting element*. We are to be with him soon ; in a few more weeks or months, none of us can tell how few, we shall be in the glory. Yes, you and I ; many of us shall be wearing the white robes and bearing the palm branches. We shall only buy two or three more almanacs, at the outside, and then we shall keep no more reckoning

of days, for we shall be where time, with its little eddies and currents, shall be forgotten in the eternal flow of the ages. But if we have not love to Jesus we shall not be where he is. There are none in heaven that have not first learned to love him here below. So we must have love to Jesus, the future imperiously demands it, and therefore I put the question with all the greater seriousness and vehemence, "Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

IV. But now I will suppose I have received an answer from you, and you are able to say you do love Jesus; then my fourth and closing head must be, IF WE DO LOVE HIM, WHAT THEN? Why then, if we do love him, let us do something for him directly, for Jesus Christ replied to Peter the moment he said, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee,"—"Feed my sheep." Very kind it was of the Saviour, because he knew from his own heart that wherever there is love there is a desire for activity. Because Jesus loved so much therefore it became his meat and his drink to do the will of his heavenly Father. So thinks Jesus—"Peter loves me, and his heart will ache if I do not give him something to do. Go and feed my lambs, go and feed my sheep." Brother, sister, if you love Christ, do not idle away this Sunday afternoon. If you love Christ, get to work. What are you doing? Attending the means of grace and getting a good feed. Is that all? Well, that is doing something for yourself. Many people in the world are very busy at feeding, among the most active with knife and fork, but I do not know that eating a man's bread is any proof of love to him. A great many professing Christians give no proof of love to Christ, except that they enjoy sermons. But now, if you love Jesus Christ as you say you do, prove it by doing good to others—"Feed my sheep." I see a company of brethren met together to hold a conference and to grow in grace. Very excellent indeed: grow away brethren as fast as ever you can—I like to see you as a flower garden, all a-growing, all a-blowing. But when you have done all that, I pray you do not congratulate yourselves as though you had done a mighty fine thing, because there is nothing in it unless it leads you to work for others. To publish accounts of such happy gatherings is like telling the poor people of Whitechapel that the Lord Mayor and Aldermen had a fine banquet of turtle soup. Suppose I read that you have had a splendid series of meetings; well, I am glad you enjoyed yourselves; but the point is this—if there is anything in it, get to work. If you love Christ, feed his sheep and lambs. If it is not all talk, if it is not all much ado about nothing, if it is not all fuss, get to soul winning, get down among the poor and needy, get down among the lost and wandering, get down among the dark and ignorant, and hold forth Jesus Christ as the Balm of Gilead and the Saviour of sinners. After all, this is the test of how much you have grown in grace—this is the test of your higher life, this is the proof of how much you have become like Jesus. What will you do for him? for if you do not go now and feed his sheep, and feed his lambs, it does not matter what you say or what you think you enjoy, you do not give that proof of love which Jesus asks for.

I put it in this final word;—when next you teach your classes, or your own families, do it for love of Jesus. Say to your heart, "I do

love Christ, and now I am going to teach for love of him." Oh, there will be a grand class this afternoon, my sister, you will get on mightily if you teach for love of him, every word you say will be powerful since it is suggested by love of him. That girl who makes so much noise, and troubles you so much, you will bear with for love of him. That restless young urchin, you cannot get the truth into him,—you tell him many tales, and when you have done he wants another; you will patiently give him another, for the love of Christ. When you pray with the little ones, pray because you love them for Christ's sake. You are going to preach, do the preaching for love of Christ. We sometimes do it because it is our turn to do it, but it should never be so. You know how delightfully servants will wait upon you if they do it for love. You have been out for a few weeks, and at last you come home. Look at the room! What a welcome is before you! They have half devastated the garden to bring in the flowers to make the table look nice for you. That supper—well, it is just the same supper that any Mary or Jane would have cooked, but see how it is put upon the table! Everything seems to say it is done for love of master and mistress, to show our affection and respect for them, and you enjoy it indescribably, because it tells of love. Now, to-morrow, and as long as ever you live, do everything out of love to Christ. It will spread flowers over your work, and make it look beautiful in his eyes. Put love's fingers to work, love's brains, love's eyes, love's hands; think with love, pray with love, speak with love, live with love, and in this way you will live with power, and God will bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xxi.

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DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 5TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”—Acts xi. 21.

THE brethren who had dwelt together in church fellowship at Jerusalem were scattered abroad by persecution which arose about Stephen. Their Master had told them that when they were persecuted in one city they were to flee to another. They obeyed his command, and in the course of escape from persecution they took very long journeys—very long journeys indeed for that age of the world, when locomotion was exceedingly difficult: but wherever they found themselves they began at once to preach Jesus Christ, so that the scattering of the disciples was also a scattering of good seed in broader fields. The malice of Satan was made the instrument of the mercy of God. Learn from this, dear brethren, every one of you, that wherever you are called to go you should persevere in making known the name and gospel of Jesus. Look upon this as your calling and occupation. You will not be scattered now by persecution, but should the demands of business carry you into different climes, employ your distant travel for missionary purposes. Providence every now and then bids you remove your tent, take care that wherever it is pitched you carry with you a testimony for Jesus. At times the necessities of health require relaxation and change of air, and this may take you to different places of public resort: seize the opportunity to encourage the churches in such localities by your presence and countenance, and also endeavour to spread the knowledge of Jesus among those to whom you may be directed. The position which you occupy in society is not an accidental one; it has not been decreed to you by a blind, purposeless fate; there is predestination in it, but that predestination is wise, and looks towards a merciful end: you are placed where you are that you may be a preserving salt to those around, a sweet savour of Christ to all who know you. The methods of divine grace have ordained a happy con-

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nection between you and the people with whom you associate; you are a messenger of mercy to them, a herald of good tidings, an epistle of Christ. The surrounding darkness needs you, and therefore it is written, "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world." You are intended to warn and rebuke some, to entreat and encourage others. To you the mourner looks for comfort and the ignorant for instruction; let them never look in vain. Be the true friend of men, observe their condition before God, and endeavour to reclaim them from their wanderings. If Joseph was sent to Egypt that he might save his father's house alive, you also are sent where you are for the sake of some hidden ones of the Lord's chosen family. If Esther was placed in the court of a heathen king for the deliverance of her nation, so are you, my sister, called to occupy your present position for the good of the church of Christ. Look ye to it, brethren, lest ye miss your life's object, and live in vain. It would be a sad thing indeed if you who profess to belong to Christ should be "creation's blot, creation's blank," by having failed to work while it is called to-day.

These good people of the early church, however, with all their zeal, were somewhat narrow-minded and hampered by their national prejudices, for they preached at first to the Jews only, and it was very hard to make them see that the gospel was meant for the whole race of man, Gentiles as well as Jews. Their Master had said "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," and yet they began with preaching to the Jews only. Words could not have been plainer, and yet they missed their meaning. It is not to be wondered at that some in our day are still unable to preach to men as men when we see how slow the early saints were to learn the lesson. Brethren, if there be any narrowness about our spirit, let us pray the Lord to take it away. We shall not, of course, be shackled as these Jews were by boasting our nationality, but perhaps there may be classes of society of whom we despair, and therefore for whom we make no effort. We say, "It would be useless to attempt the conversion of such characters. I feel myself quite able to talk to other persons; but although I am placed in the midst of these people I cannot bring my mind to speak with them about spiritual things, for I feel hopeless of success." Beloved, may you be delivered from this snare, and learn to sow beside all waters. The Gentiles, though they were for awhile passed over by the brethren, turned out to be the most hopeful of all classes; from the Gentile fields they reaped harvests such as were never gathered in Judea. Antioch with its Grecians became famous among Christian churches—there the church of Christ first took its name amid a revival of religion, when great multitudes believed and turned unto the Lord. God had from of old intended that the great majority of the election of grace should be gathered out of those very Gentiles whom even the apostles themselves scarcely ventured to address. Now then, my brother, in the light of this incident begin to work where as yet you have done nothing: begin to hope where hitherto you have despaired, throw out your best energies in that very direction in which you have felt most hampered, for there awaits you, to your own intense surprise, a success which will amply reward you. You need not restrict yourselves to lands familiar with the plough, invade the

primeval forest, fell the ancient trees, and clear the broad acres : that virgin soil will yield you harvests a hundredfold such as you will never find in fields where others have laboured before you. If your spiritual mining is becoming a failure, open fresh lodes of the precious metal, for veins of treasure lie concealed in the unbroken ground. Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught, and multitudes of fish shall crowd the net. It seems to me to be the obvious teaching of the text that wherever we are cast we should try to do good, and that we may hope for the largest success among the most neglected portions of society.

Coming closely to the text, I desire to press upon you this morning, with great earnestness, the need of the conversion of men, and the desirableness that we should have many converted here, and I shall want to suggest what we can do to produce that result. In all these I beg to be assisted by the Holy Spirit, without whose aid I shall only exhibit my own weakness, and deaden those energies which I long to arouse. These will be our heads : first, *the end we aim at*, that many may believe and turn unto the Lord ; secondly, *the power by which this can be attained*, "The hand of the Lord was with them" ; thirdly, *the desirableness of our object* ; and, fourthly, *how we may promote its attainment*.

I. Let us speak upon THE END WHICH WE DESIRE. It may seem very commonplace, but it is in fact one of the grandest designs under heaven : he who contemplates it has a higher aim than philosopher, reformer, or patriot. He aims at that for which the Son of God both lived and died. We desire that men may believe, that is to say, first, *that they may believe the testimony of Jesus Christ to be true*, for there are some who have not reached as far as that : they reject altogether the inspired Word, and to them the incarnation, the redemption, the resurrection, the glory, the second advent, are so many old wives' fables. You to whom these truths are the light of your lives can scarcely realise the power of unbelief of this kind, and yet some men live and die in its gloom. We pray that they may be taught better, and that the evidence of these great facts may be forced home upon them. Alas, there are many who profess to believe these things, but their only reason for so doing is that they have been taught so from their childhood, and it is the current religion of the nation. They regard the inspiration of Scripture, and so on, as matters about which it is not expedient to trouble themselves,—they do not care one way or the other, but find it the easier and more respectable plan to admit the truth of the gospel, and think no more about it. Such a vain complimentary belief is rather an insult to our holy faith than a thing to be rejoiced in. But, dear friends, we want more than this faith of indifference, which is little more than dishonest unbelief ; we want men to believe for themselves, because they are personally convinced and have felt in themselves the saving power of Christ Jesus. We pray that nominal believers may treat the doctrines of revelation, not as dogmas, but as facts ; not as opinions, but as verities ; as surely facts as the events of history, as much verities as the actual incidents of every day life ; for, alas, the grand doctrines of eternal truth are frequently treated as venerable no-mementities, and have no effect whatever upon the conduct of those who

profess to receive them, because they do not realise them as matters of fact, or see their solemn bearings. It is shocking to reflect that a change in the weather has more effect on some men's lives than the dread alternative of heaven or hell. A woman's glance affects them more than the eye of God. We, therefore, desire to see men really and truly believing the facts of the gospel, in an honest, practical manner.

We cannot, however, be content with this; we labour *that those around us may savingly believe by putting their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ*. This is the grand saving act: the man brings his soul and commits it to Christ for safe keeping, and that entrusting of the soul to Jesus saves him. He makes the Saviour trustee of his spiritual estates, and leaves himself and all his eternal interests in those dear hands which once were nailed to the cross. Oh, how we long to see the Holy Spirit bringing men to this, that they may believe in Jesus Christ by resting in him and trusting upon him. For this we live, for this we would be content to die, that many might believe.

The end we aim at is that men may so believe in Jesus that they may be altogether changed in their relation towards God, for "many believed *and turned unto the Lord*." What does that mean? It means that these heathen gave up their idols and began to worship the only living and true God. We desire, dear hearers, that faith in the Lord Jesus may lead you to give up the objects of your idolatrous love, yourselves, your money, your pleasures, the world, the flesh, the devil; for there be some whose God is their belly, and who glory in their shame. When a man believes in Jesus Christ he puts away his false gods, and worships the great Father of spirits; he makes no inferior object the aim of his being, but henceforth lives for the glory of God. This is a glorious turning, a complete conversion of the man's heart and soul.

To turn to God means not merely to forsake the false god for the true, but to turn from the love of sin. Sin lies that way, but God's glory lies in the opposite quarter. He who looks sinward has his back to God—he who looks Godward has his back to sin. It is blessed conversion when men turn from the folly of sin to the glory of God. With weeping and supplication do men so turn, confessing their wrongdoing, lamenting their transgressions, abhorring their evil lustings, desiring pardon, and hoping for renewal of their nature. Precious in the sight of the Lord are the tears of penitence and the sighs of contrite hearts. We can never be satisfied with the results of our ministry unless faith leads man to hearty repentance towards God, an intense loathing of their sins, and an actual forsaking of them.

To turn to God means that henceforth God shall be sought in prayer. "Behold he prayeth" is one of the indications of a true convert. The man who lives without prayer lives without God, but the man who has turned to God is familiar with the mercy-seat. What a turning it is when the eye is turned upward to seek the Lord with the solemn glancing of the eye, when none but God is near. To turn to God means to yield yourself obediently to his sway, to be willing to do what he bids, to think what he teaches, and to be what he commands. Faith is nothing unless it brings with it a willing and obedient mind. Wilful rebellion is the child of unbelief, sincere obedience is the offspring of humble believing. "They believed, and turned unto the Lord." We

want men, indeed, so to turn that their whole life shall be a going towards God, a growing more like him, a closer communing with him, leading on to the soul's becoming perfectly like him, and dwelling for ever where he is.

Now, dear friends, when I speak thus of believing and turning unto God some will say, "Well, but that must be a very easy matter, only to believe and turn." Yes, my brethren, it appears simple, but it is none the less vitally essential. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed." You say, "Why make all this stir about it?" Just because upon this apparently little matter depends the present and eternal condition of the sinner. To believe and to turn to God is to be delivered from the present dominion of sin, and from the future punishment of it: to be without faith and without God is to be without joy here and without hope hereafter. Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is what you and I must aim at in all our attempts to influence our fellow men. It may be useful to reform them, but it is far better that grace should regenerate them. God speed every effort to promote sobriety, chastity, thrift, honesty, and morality; but you and I are sent for something more than this, our work goes deeper and is more difficult; it is not ours to wash the blackamoor, but to seek to change his skin; we do not so much pray that the lion may be tamed as that he may be turned into a lamb. It may be well to lop the branches of the tree of sin, but our business is to lay the axe at the root of the trees by leading men to turn to God. This is a change, not of the outward conduct merely, but of the heart; and if we do not see this result, if men do not believe and turn to God, we have laboured in vain, and spent our strength for naught and in vain. If there are no believings and turnings to the Lord, we may get us to our secret chambers and bewail ourselves before God because none have believed our report, and the arm of the Lord has not been revealed. There is the object—aim at it, saying, "This one thing I do." Praying in the Holy Ghost, and depending upon his power, push on with this one sole object. Drive at it, you teachers in the Sabbath-school; do not be satisfied with instructing the children, labour to have them converted. Drive at it, you preachers; do not believe that you have done your work when you have taught the people, you must never rest till they believe in Jesus Christ. Pursue this end in every sermon or Sabbath-school address; throw your whole soul into this one object. Yours must not be a cold inculcation of an external morality, but a warm enthusiasm for an inward regeneration. You are not to bring men to believe in themselves and so become self-made men, but to lead them to believe in Jesus, and to become new creatures in him. There is our end and aim, are we all alive to it?

II. Secondly, let us consider **THE POWER BY WHICH THIS CAN BE ATTAINED**,—"The hand of the Lord was with them." None ever believe in Jesus except those in whom God's arm has been revealed, for Jesus says, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." But, brethren, in answer to prayer that power has been revealed among his people, and is with them still. His arm is not shortened that he cannot save, neither has he withdrawn it from

his church. Be encouraged while I suggest to you a few thoughts. The hand of God is upon many of our friends before we speak to them. It is most pleasant to me when I am seeing inquirers, to observe how God makes ready the hearts of my hearers. I am studying a certain subject, and praying to God for a blessing on it, and upstairs in a chamber, which I have never seen, one of my hearers is being made ready for my message; he is smitten with a sense of sin, or troubled with uneasy thoughts, or rendered hopeful of better things, and thus he is being made ready to accept the Christ whom I shall preach to him; yes, and ready to accept that particular form of the gospel message which the Spirit of God gave me when I preached. There on a sick bed will lie a woman painfully exercised with the sad memory of her sinful life, in order that when she comes up to the house of God every word may have power over her. Sickness and pain, shame and poverty, often produce a condition of mind most hopeful for the reception of the gospel. A man well to do in circumstances has been ruined in business, he despairs of happiness below, and therefore comes to hear the gospel, made willing to seek his happiness above. Another has lately felt failures of bodily strength, and so has been warned that life is frail, and thus he is prepared to listen to the admonitions which speak of eternity. Courage, minister of God: you are nothing, but the Almighty God is with you. When you lift your hand to build the house of the Lord, omnipotence works with you, and makes your labour a success. Every revolution of those awful wheels, so ponderous that even the prophet said, "O wheel!" is working to accomplish the object which is near your heart. The stars in their courses fight for you. The stones of the field are in league with you. Eternal wisdom plans for you, infinite power works with you, boundless patience perseveres with you, and almighty love will conquer by you. "The hand of the Lord was with them." What more do we want? Sow, brother, for God has ploughed. Go up and build, for God has prepared the stones and made ready the foundation.

Moreover, the hand of the Lord is with his people in helping the teachers and preachers themselves. There are strange impulses which come over us at times, which make us think and say what otherwise had never crossed our minds, and these work with power upon men's minds. If you will live to win souls it shall be given you in the self-same hour what ye shall speak. You will often say to an inquirer what you would not have beforehand arranged to say, but God, who knows that inquirer's heart better than you do, has prevented your saying what you would have liked to have said, and has led you to say what you afterwards judged to be a mistake. My experience teaches me that we are often wise in our ignorance, and as often foolish in our wisdom. We have frequently done best when we felt that we did but badly. If we will but trust God and be whole-hearted in the winning of souls we shall have a power assisting us in our speech of which the greatest orator in the world is not aware. Speak in the House of Commons for a party, and you will have to look within for aid, but speak in the house of the Lord and you may look upward for spiritual aid. The poet invokes the fabled muses, but for you, O servant of the Lord, there is real help from a higher source. Think of this, ye workers, and be encouraged.

Besides providence and the gracious help by which good men speak, there is a distinct work of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men where the gospel is preached. Not only is the Spirit in the Word, but over and above that, in his own elect God worketh most effectually, so the truth is rendered irresistible. Let us never forget where our great strength lieth, for in this matter we must rely alone upon the *Spirit* of God. How often has God wrought in the power of his grace by making men feel the majesty of the word. They come, perhaps, to hear the preacher out of the idlest curiosity, they look for something which shall amuse them; but the truth comes home to them and searches their heart. Simple as the language is, "as if an angel spake they hear the solemn sound"; it goes through them like a dart, and they cannot help feeling, "Surely God was there, and he spoke with me."

The Spirit of God makes men recollect their sins: they try to forget them, but sometimes they cannot; sad memories steal over them, and wholesome regrets thrill their very souls. Men who have been giddy and careless, and forgetful, have on a sudden found themselves turning over the pages of their old diaries, and with thoughtfulness reviewing the past: all this leads to repentance and faith. That same Spirit makes men see the beauty of holiness; they cannot help admiring it, though they are far from it. They are charmed with the loveliness of the character of Jesus, and begin to feel that there is something about it which they would wish to imitate. When the preacher proclaims the way of salvation the same Spirit leads men to admire it, and to say within themselves, "There is something here which human wisdom could never have devised," and they begin to long for a share in it. A wish takes possession of their heart, as though some strange bird from an unknown land had flown into their souls, and had amazed them with a new song. They do not know where the desire came from, but they feel strangely bound to entertain the stranger. Sometimes also the Spirit blows like a hurricane through men's hearts, and they have been borne along by its power without the will to resist. As when a tempest rushes across the sea, and drives the frail bark before it helplessly, so have I known the divine Spirit sweep away the peace and quiet of the soul's self-righteousness, stir up the depths of inward trouble, make the soul reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and impel the heart forward to the iron-bound coast of self-despair, where every false hope and vain-glorious trust has been wrecked for ever. Glory be to God when this is the case, for then the soul is driven to cling to Jesus.

Yes, brethren, it is not the preacher, and it is not altogether what the preacher says, but there is a power abroad, as potent as that by which the worlds were made. Unbelievers sometimes ask, "Where is your God?" O sirs, if you once felt the power of the great Spirit you would never ask that question. "Since the fathers fell asleep," say they, "all things continue as they were;" but this they willingly are ignorant of, that new creations are being wrought every day, that there are men and women alive in this world who are neither liars nor enthusiasts, who can declare that upon their spirit the eternal power and Godhead has operated and changed them, conquering them, and holding them henceforth as willing captives to its supreme majesty. Yes, brethren, there

is a hand of the Lord, and that hand of the Lord is with his people still. If it be not, then we shall see no believing and no turning to God; but since it is still at work among us, let us work on, for as surely as we live we shall see great numbers converted to God, and God will be glorified.

III. Let us now dwell upon **THE DESIRABLENESS OF CONVERSIONS.** It is no new thing to you and to me to see many believing and turning to God. These two-and-twenty years God's hand has been stretched out still: we have had no spasm of revival, we have not alternated between furious spurts and sudden lulls, but month by month, I think I might say Sabbath by Sabbath, souls have been saved, and the church has grown exceedingly, and God has been glorified. What we have enjoyed we desire to retain—yea, we would have more. The Lord says to us what he said to the church at Philadelphia, "Hold fast what thou hast, that no man take thy crown," and our crown is the crown of soul winning, which we must hold fast, for we cannot endure to lose it. This must be our crown, that we have preached the gospel, both minister and church members, and have been all of us soul-winners. We desire this because, first of all, we desire to see truth, godliness, virtue, and holiness extended. Who among you does not? Does not every good man wish others to be good, every honest man wish others to be honest? Does not every man who loves his family desire that other families should be well-ordered? Oh, then, if there were no nobler reason, you may desire that men may be converted, since conversion is the root of everything that is pure, and lovely, and of good report.

You desire, too, that your fellow-creatures should be happy, but there is no such happiness as that which springs out of reconciliation to God. The peace which you yourselves enjoy through pardoned sin must surely make you desire that others may possess the same. If religion be indeed a source of perennial joy to yourself, you are inhuman if you do not wish others to drink of it. Brother, as you would make eyes sparkle, as you would make countenances radiant with delight, as I know you would spread gladness on all sides, desire above all things that your children, your relations, your neighbours, your friends, should be converted to God. Thus shall thorns and briars give place to myrtles and rose, and deserts shall be turned into gardens of the Lord.

You also desire conversion, I am sure, because you feel the dreadful hazard of unconverted men. You have not yet subscribed to the modern doctrine that these men and women around you are only two-legged cats and dogs and horses, and will ultimately die out and cease to be. You believe in the God-given immortality of human souls, a heritage from which no man can escape, the noblest of all man's endowments; in itself the highest of all boons, though sin may pervert it into the direst of all necessities. You would have scant motives for desiring men's conversion if you did not believe that there is another and everlasting state; but, believing that men live hereafter, and exist for ever, you must, I am sure, be eager that men may escape from the wrath to come. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, you would persuade men; judging that there is one of two things for them all, either "These shall go away into

everlasting punishment"; or else, "The righteous into life eternal," you can never rest until you feel convinced that those about you are partakers of life eternal. Look at any unconverted person, and your sympathies should be aroused. If I saw tokens of fever, or marks of consumption in the face of any one I loved, I should be struck with alarm; what, then, must I feel when I see damnation—as I do see it—in the face of every unbeliever? How is it that we are not more distressed than we are when men are perishing in their sins? Why, my brethren, are we not more intent upon the conversion of men? Let these questions humble us and cause great searchings of heart. It is a shame to us that we have so little of the mind of Christ, so little compassion for men's souls.

Moreover, brethren, self-preservation is a law of nature, and the Church can never preserve herself except by increasing from the world by conversion. Where are the preachers for the next generation? To-day they are amongst the ungodly, and we must labour to bring them to God. Where are the stones that are to make the next course in the walls of our Zion? They are unquarried yet, and we must, by God's grace, excavate them. We who now labour for the Lord will soon go our ways. Our thrones and crowns are waiting for us, and the angels are beckoning us away; who will fill our places? Who will bear the banner? Who will blow the trumpet? Who will wield the sword? We must find new champions in the ranks of the foe; they must be born unto God, and we must pray that this may be accomplished by our instrumentality.

Seek conversions *for Christ's sake*. You know the agony and bloody sweat; shall these be spent in vain? You know the nailing to the cross and the shriek of "Why hast thou forsaken me?" shall these be unrewarded? You have thought over and trusted in the bitter pangs of your Redeemer's death; shall he not see of the travail of his soul? Shall he not be satisfied? These lost sheep are *his* sheep, for whom he shed his precious blood; these lost pieces of money are *his* money, and they bear his image and superscription; shall they not be found? These lost sons, away there spending their living in riotousness, are *his* brothers, children of *his* Father; do you not desire for Jesus' sake that they should be brought home?

Dear friends, what joy it will be to yourselves if men believe and turn to the Lord by your means. I put that motive last, and hope it will not be the strongest, but it may yet be one of the liveliest. What joy it will be to yourselves if you see many converted! Somebody has asked, "If the heathen are not evangelised, what will become of them?" I will put another question of a far more practical character. If you do not try to evangelise the heathen, *what will become of you?* Do not so much inquire about *their* destiny as your own, if you have no care for their salvation. He who never seeks the conversion of another is in imminent danger of being damned himself. I do not believe in any man's salvation who is wrapped up in self, assuredly he is not saved from selfishness. I cannot believe in any man's possessing the Spirit of God who is indifferent to the condition of others, for one of the first fruits of the Spirit is love. Even as flowers at their very first blooming shed their perfume, so do the saved ones in their earliest days of

grace desire the good of their fellows. I know that one of my earliest impulses when I first looked to Christ and lost the burden of my sin was to tell everybody around me of the blessings I had received, for I longed to make others as happy as I was. I do fear me that you who never try to win souls lack an essential part of the Christian character. I leave the question with your own consciences.

IV. Fourthly, let us enquire, WHAT WE CAN DO TO PROMOTE CONVERSIONS. Conversion is God's work: it cannot be wrought without his hand. Without him we can do nothing. Our hand is far too puny for such a work; the power of the first disciples and our own lies in the fact mentioned in the text,—“The hand of the Lord was with them.” Still, there are certain circumstances under which that hand will work, and there are hindrances which will restrain it. Let us think awhile. First, then, if sinners are to be converted *we must distinctly aim at it*. As a rule, a man does what he tries to do, and not that which is mere by-play. The conversion of sinners is not one of those things which a man is likely to accomplish without intending it. Sometimes in the sovereignty of God a preacher who does not aim at conversion may nevertheless be made useful, for God works as he wills; but largely, and as a rule men do not win souls if they do not eagerly desire to do so. Fishing for men cannot be carried out by throwing in the net anyhow, without caring whether fish be caught or no. Few traders become rich by accident, they generally have to plod and work hard for money: and to be rich in treasures of saved souls you must aim at it and labour for it. I am struck with astonishment as I think how many sermons are preached, how many Sunday-school addresses are given, how many religious books are written of which you are quite sure that the intention was not immediate conversion. It is thought that in some unknown way these good things may accidentally contribute to men's salvation, but they are not aimed at as their present object. Ah, brother, if you want men to come to Christ you must preach Christ to them with all your heart, with this design, that immediately they may close in with Christ, and at once give their hearts to Jesus. Yes, and you are to pray that they may do so through the present effort which you are making for their good. There is the target, and if you continue to shoot into the air long enough an arrow may perhaps strike it; but, man alive, if you want to win the prize of archery you had better fix your eye upon the white and take your aim distinctly and with skill. If an individual would win souls he must bend his whole soul to it and make it the object of his whole energy.

Next to that we must take care if we would have souls won that we *press upon them the truths which God usually blesses*. Shall I read to you the verse before my text? Here it is: “They spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus, and the hand of the Lord was with them.” Now, if we do not preach Jesus Christ we shall not see souls saved. There are certain forms of doctrines which condemn themselves by working out their own extinction. Did you ever hear of a minister whose preaching leaned towards Unitarianism but what the congregation sooner or later began to diminish? Though many such preachers have been men of great ability, they have not as a rule been

able to keep the dead thing on its feet. You shall go into our small towns, and you may find an ancient chapel which was once an Independent, or a Presbyterian, or it may be a Baptist chapel ; but if you see over the door "*Unitarian*," you have, as a rule, seen all that there is. There is neither church nor congregation worthy of the name ; frequently the place is never opened at all, and the grass grows knee deep on the path to the door. Even when these little places are used, you will generally find that they contain half a dozen nobodies who think themselves everybody as to intellect and culture. It is a religion of the utmost value to spiders, for those insects are able to spin their webs in the meeting-houses without fear. Who ever heard, who ever will hear of a Unitarian Whitfield, or a Socinian Moody gathering twenty thousand people to listen to a Christless gospel ? It is a phenomenon which never has been seen and never will be. Men's instincts lead them to turn away from a creed which contains so little which can solace the troubled soul.

If we want souls saved we must equally avoid the modern intellectual system in all its phases. "Oh," cries somebody, "you should hear the great Mr. Bombast. It is—Oh, I cannot tell you what it is, but something very wonderful ; it is an intellectual treat." Just so ; but how many conversions are wrought by this wonderful display of genius ? How many hearts are broken by fine rhetoric ? How many broken hearts are healed by philosophy ? So far as I have observed, I find that God does not save souls by intellectual treats.

Certain views as to man's future are equally to be kept clear of, if you would be the means of conversion. Diminish your ideas of the wrath of God and the terrors of hell, and in that proportion you will diminish the results of your work. I could not conceive a Bunyan or a Baxter, or any other great soul-winner, falling into these new notions, or if he did there would be an end to his success. Other crotchets and novelties of doctrine are also to be let alone, for they are not likely to promote your object, but will most probably divert men's attention from the vital point. Dear brothers and sisters, if you want a harvest, look well to your seed. Time was when gardeners threw all the little potatoes on one side for seed, and then they had bad crops ; but now I have seen them pick out the very best and put them by. "We must have good seed," say they. If I had to sow my fields with wheat I would not take the tail corn. I should grudge no expense about seed, for it would be false economy to buy any but the very best. Go preach, teach, and instruct with the best doctrine, even that of God's word ; for depend upon it though the result is not in your hands, yet it very much depends upon what you teach. O, eternal and ever blessed Spirit, guide thy servants into all truth !

Next to this, if you want to win souls for Christ, *feel a solemn alarm about them*. You cannot make them feel if you do not feel yourself. Believe their danger, believe their helplessness, believe that only Christ can save them, and talk to them as if you meant it. The Holy Spirit will move them by first moving *you*. If you can rest without their being saved *they* will rest too ; but if you are filled with an agony for them, if you cannot bear that they should be lost, you will soon find that they are uneasy too. I hope you will get into such a state that you

will dream about your child, or about your hearer perishing for lack of Christ, and start up at once and begin to cry, "O God, give me converts or I die." Then you will have converts; there is no fear about that. God does not send travail pangs to his servants without causing them to abound in spiritual children. There will be new births to God when you are agonising for them.

But, let me add, *there must be much prayer*. I delight to be at prayer-meetings where the brethren will not let the Lord go except he bless them, when a brother prays, choking as he speaks, tears rolling down his cheeks as he pleads with God to have mercy on the sons of men. I am always certain that sinners are ordained to be blessed when I see saints thus compelled to plead with God for them. In your closets alone, at your family altars, and in your gatherings for prayer be importunate, and the hand of the Lord must and will be with you. Cry aloud and spare not, plead as for your lives, and bring forth your strong arguments, for only by prevailing with God will you be enabled to prevail with men.

Then there must be added to prayer *direct personal effort on the part of all of you*. Great numbers may be saved by my preaching if the Holy Spirit blesses it, but I shall expect larger numbers if you all turn preachers, if every brother and sister here becomes a witness for Christ. Are you indolent? Are any of you beginning to sleep? I charge you, wake up. By the love you bear to Jesus, and by the love you bear to your fellow men, begin at once to seek the conversion of those who dwell around you. O my beloved, do not become lukewarm. My heart fails me at the very thought. If you are earnest, I live; if you grow slothful, my spirit dies within me.

Last of all, if you want to see many converts, *expect them*. "According to your faith so be it unto you." Look out for them; believe that God will bless every sermon, and go a-hunting after the sermon to see where the converts are. As a company of sutlers and camp-followers generally follow every army, and after a battle go up to strip the slain, so if you cannot preach I would have you follow after the warriors to gather in the spoil. No one needed to urge the voracious spoilers to prowl over the field of Sedan or Gravelotte, but now it even seems needful to persuade you to collect a far nobler prey. Come ye up, come ye up, ye servants of the Lord, and divide the spoil with the strong. Christ has fought your battle, his arrows have been sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, the two-edged sword has smitten right and left; come ye up, ye sons of Jacob, to the prey, and gather in the converts as your spoil. Speak with the young converts, cheer the broken hearts, comfort the seekers, and bring into his palace trophies for your Lord. Verily, I say unto you, if ye look not for conversions neither shall ye obtain them, but then blame not the Lord; ye are not straitened in him, but in your own bowels. God bless you, beloved, and may we have a larger increase to this church during the next month than we have had for years past, that our God may have greater praise.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts xi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—387, 450, 381.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CONVERSIONS ENCOURAGED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 12TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them."—Deuteronomy iv. 29—31.

LAST Sabbath-day the title of my discourse was "Conversions desired," and my earnest prayer to God has been that the effect of this morning's sermon may be conversions accomplished. I cannot be happy unless I indulge the hope that some will this morning turn unto God with full purpose of heart, led to do so by the power of divine grace. For this I sought the Lord, and at this I resolved to aim. I asked myself, "What is the most likely subject in the hand of the Holy Spirit to lead men to the Lord? Shall I preach the terrors of the Lord, or shall I proclaim the sweetness of divine mercy? Each of these has its proper use, but which will be most likely to answer our design to-day?" I remembered the fable of the sun and the wind. These rival powers competed as to which could compel the traveller to cast away his cloak. The wind blew boisterously, and tugged at the garment as if it would tear it from the traveller's shoulders, but he buttoned it the closer about him, and held it firmly with his hand. The battle was not to the strong and threatening. Then the sun burst forth from behind a cloud, when the wind had ceased its blustering, and smiled upon the traveller with warmth of kindness until he loosened his cloak, and by-and-by was glad to take it off altogether: the soft, sweet influence of the sun had vanquished where the storm had raged in vain. So I thought, perhaps if I preach the tender mercy of God, and his readiness to forgive, it may be to my hearers as the warm beams of the sun to the traveller, and they will cast away the garments of their sin and self-righteousness. I know that the arrows of love are keen, and wound many hearts which are invulnerable to the sword of wrath. O that these sacred darts may

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win the victory this day! When ships at sea apprehend a storm they will gladly make for an open harbour, but if it be doubtful whether they can enter the port they will rather weather the tempest than run the risk of being unable to enter the harbour's mouth. Some havens can only be entered when the tide happens to be at the flood, and therefore the captain will not venture: but when the welcome signals are flying and it is clear that there is plenty of water, and that they may safely run behind the breakwater, they hesitate no longer, but make sail for the shelter. Let seeking souls know this day that the Lord's harbour of refuge is open, the port of free grace can be reached, that there is sea room for the hugest transgressor, and love enough to float the greatest sinner into port. Ho, weather-beaten vessels, ye may come and welcome! There is no need that even for a solitary hour ye should run the risk of the tempest of almighty wrath; you are invited to find shelter and to enjoy it now.

It is rather singular that having these ideas floating in my mind, and desiring to preach free grace and abounding mercy, I should have found my text in Deuteronomy. Why, that is a book of the law, and is plentifully besprinkled with terrible threatenings, and yet I find a gospel theme in it: yea, and one of the very richest! As I read it I admired it for its connection as well as for its own fulness, it seems to me so pleasant to find this lily among thorns. As in the wintry months of the opening year one finds a crocus smiling up from the cold soil and in its golden cup offering a taste of the sunlight which summer will more fully bring, so amid the ungenial pages of the law I see this precious gospel declaration, which like the spring flower assures us that God's love is yet alive, and will bring us happier times. My thoughts also likened this passage to the water which leaped from the smitten rock, for the law is like a rock, and the Pentateuch is hard and stern as granite; but here in its very bowels we find a crystal spring of which the thirsty may drink. I likened the text also to the manna lying on the desert sand, the bread of heaven glittering like a shining pearl upon the barren soil of the wilderness. Here amid the fiery statutes of the law, and the terrible judgments threatened by the God of Sinai you see this manna of mercy dropped about your tents this morning, as fresh, I hope, to you as if but newly fallen. May you eat of it and live for ever.

Let us come to our text at once. The Lord here encourages sinners to turn to himself, and find abundant grace. He encourages sinners who had violated his plainest commandments, who had made idols, and so had corrupted themselves, and had consequently been visited with captivity, and other chastisements—he invites them to turn from their evil ways and seek his face. I feel moved to say at the commencement of this discourse that if the text has any limited aspect, if it is to be regarded as uttered to any special character among transgressors, it peculiarly belongs to *backsliders*; for the people to whom it was first addressed were the people of God, but they had set up idols, and so had wandered; and it is to them chiefly, though not to them exclusively, that these encouragements to repentance are presented. As probably there are some backsliders here who once stood in the church of God, but have been cut off therefrom, who once were very zealous and earnest in the cause of God, but have now become utterly indifferent to all religion,

I charge such to take this text home to themselves. Take every syllable of it into your own heart, backslider. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the same, and may the text bring you to your knees and to your God. It gives you a pointed invitation to return from your wanderings and end your weary backslidings by coming once more to your Father's house, for he will not forsake you, nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of mercy which he has made on your behalf. Happy are you that you may return; happy shall I be if you do return. I thought I would lay special stress upon this, because the Lord himself, and his ministers with him, rejoice more over one lost sheep that returns to the Shepherd of souls than over ninety and nine that went not astray. There is rejoicing when a man finds a treasure which he never had before, but it is scarcely equal to the joy of the woman who found the piece of money which was hers already, but which she had lost. Glad is the house when the babe is born, but deeper is the joy when the lost son is found. My soul longs to see the Lord bring home his banished ones, and to be the means of gathering his scattered ones.

Still, the text is fully applicable to all sinners—to all who have corrupted themselves and done evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger. The Ever-merciful encourages them to turn to him with full purpose of heart, by assuring them that he will not forsake them. There seems to me to be in the text three points which should induce an earnest seeking of his face at once, for here is, first, *a time mentioned*; secondly, *a way appointed*; and thirdly, *encouragement given*.

I. First, then, in the text there is *A TIME MENTIONED*. Look at it: "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord. . . When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days."

The time in which the Lord bids you seek him, O you unforgiven ones, is first of all, "*from thence*," that is, from the condition into which you have fallen, or the position which you now occupy. According to the connection of the text, the offending Israelites were supposed to be in captivity, scattered among various nations, dwelling where they were compelled to worship gods of wood and stone, which could not see, nor hear, nor feel, nor eat, nor smell; yet "*from thence*"—from the unhallowed heathen villages, from their lone sorrows by the waters of Babylon, from their captivity in far-off Chaldea, they were bidden to turn unto the Lord and obey his voice. Their surroundings were not to be allowed to hinder their prayers. Perhaps, dear friend, at this time you are dwelling amongst ungodly relations; if you begin to speak about religion you are put down at once, you hear nothing that can help you in the way to better things, but very much that would hinder you; nevertheless, do not delay, but "*from thence*," even from thence seek you the Lord, for it is written: "If thou seek him he will be found of thee." It may be you are living in a neighbourhood where everything is hostile to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and injurious even to your morals. Time was, and you may remember it with regret, when you were a child upon the knee of a pious mother, when you spent your Sabbaths in the Sunday-school, when the Bible was read in your house every day: but now all these helps are taken from you, and everything around is dragging you down to greater and yet greater sin. Do not, however, make this a reason for delay; as well might a

man refuse to go to a physician because he lives in an unhealthy locality, or a drowning man refuse the life-boat because a raging sea surrounds him. Hasten rather than slacken your speed. Do not tarry till your position improve; do not wait till you move into a godly family, or live nearer to the means of grace, for if thou seek him "from thence" he will be found of thee.

But you will tell me that it is not so much your regret that others are ungodly among whom you dwell, but that you yourself are in a wretched condition of heart, for you have followed after one sin and another until evil has become a habit with you, and you cannot shake it off. Like a rolling thing before the whirlwind you are driven on; an awful force impels you from bad to worse. Arouse yourself, O man, for immediate action, for if you wait till you have conquered this evil force by your own strength, if you delay to turn unto God until you are free from the dominion of sin, then assuredly you will wait for ever, and perish in your folly. If you could vanquish evil by your own power you would not need to seek the Lord, for you would have found salvation in yourself; but be not so infatuated as to dream of such a thing. To-day, "from thence," from the place where you now are, turn your face to your Father who is in heaven, and seek him through Jesus Christ. Recollect that hymn which ought to be sung every Sabbath-day in our assemblies—

"Just as I am—and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come."

Every verse begins with "Just as I am," and so must your prayer, your faith, your hope begin. The whole hymn commences "Just as I am," and so must your Christian life be started.

The Lord invites you as you are and where you are. Are you one of a godless family, the only one in the house who has felt any serious thought at all? Come, then, and tarry not, for the Lord invites you. Are you the one man in a large workshop, where all the rest are irreligious? Admire his sovereign grace, accept the call, and henceforth be the Lord's. The Lord invites those of you who have gone to the ends of the earth in sin, and brought yourselves into captivity by your rebellion. To-day, even to-day, he bids you seek him "with all your heart and with all your soul."

With regard to the time of turning, it is well worthy of our notice that we are specially encouraged to turn unto the Lord if we are in a painful plight. Our text says, "*When thou art in tribulation.*" Are you sick? Have you felt ill for some time? Does your weakness increase upon you? Are you apprehensive that this sickness may even be unto death? When thou art in such tribulation then thou mayest return to him. A sick body should lead us the more earnestly to seek healing for our sick soul. Are you poor, have you come down from a comfortable position to one of hard labour and of scant provision? When thou art in this tribulation then turn to the Lord, for he has sent thee this need to make thee see thy yet greater necessity, even thy need of himself. The empty purse should make thee remember thy soul poverty, the bare cupboard should lead thee to see the emptiness of all thy carnal confidences, and accumulating debts should compel thee to calculate

how much thou owest to thy Lord. It is possible that your trials are very bitter at this moment, because you are expecting to lose some whom you dearly love, and this is like rending half yourself away. One dear child is hardly cold in the tomb, and your heart is bleeding when you think of this loss—and now another is sickening and will follow the first. When thou art in this tribulation, then be sure to seek the Lord, for his pitying heart is open to thee, and he will sanctify this grief to noblest purposes. Is it possible that I speak to one whose sins have become so open as to have been punished by the law of the land? Have you lost your character? Will none employ you any longer? When thou art in this tribulation then turn to thy Lord, for he will receive earth's castaways, and make criminals his sons. Have you suffered from the just verdict of society because you are vicious, dishonest, and disreputable? Are you at this time despised and looked down upon? Yet even to you would I say, when thou art in tribulation, when every door is shut, when all hands are held up against you, even then seek the Lord, and he will be found of you. If your father scarcely dares to think upon your name, if you have been a grief to your sister's heart, and have brought your mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, yet now, even in this shameful estate, when thou art in tribulation turn to the Lord thy God.

Doubtless there are some people who will never be saved except they come into tribulation. Their substance must all be spent, and a mighty famine must come upon them, the citizens of the far country must refuse them aid, and with hungry bellies they must stand at the trough and be willing to feed with the swine, or else it will never occur to them to say, "I will arise and go to my father." No matter how deep your trouble, your safest and wisest course is to flee to God in Christ Jesus, and put your trust in him.

Notice further, when you feel that the judgments of God have begun to overtake you, then you may come to him: "When thou art in tribulation and *all these things*—these threatened things—*are come upon thee.*" There are many in this world who feel as if their sin had at last found them out, and had commenced to be a hell to them. The manslayer has overtaken them, and is striking at them with terrible blows. "Ah," says one, "my great sins have provoked at last God, and all men may see what he has done unto me, for he has removed my choicest mercies from me. I despised a father's instruction—that father is dead; I did not value my mother's tears—my mother sleeps under the sod. The dear wife who used to beg me to walk to the house of God with her; I slighted and treated her with unkindness, and death has removed her from my bosom. The little child that used to climb my knee and sing its little hymns, and persuade me to pray, has gone too! God has found me out at last, and begun to strip me. These are only the first drops of an awful shower of wrath from which I cannot escape. Alas, while one mercy after another is removed, my former joys have been embittered, and are joys no more. I go to the theatre as I used to do, but I do not enjoy it. I see beneath the paint and the gilt, and it seems a mockery of my woe. My old companions come to see me, and they would sing me the old songs, but I cannot bear them; their mirth grates on my ear—at times it seems to be mere

idiotic yelling. I used to get alone and philosophise and dote upon many things which afforded me comfort, but now I find no consolation in them—I have no joy of my thoughts now. The world is dreary, and my soul is weary. I am in the sere and yellow leaf, and all the world is fading with me. What little joy I had before has utterly departed, and no new joy comes. I am neither fit for God nor fit for the devil. I can find no peace in sin, and no rest in religion. Into the narrow way I fear I cannot enter, and in the broad way I am so jostled that I do not know how to pursue my course. Worst of all there is before me a dreadful outlook; I am filled with horrible apprehensions of the dread hereafter. I am afraid of the harvest which must follow the sad seed sowing of my misspent life. I have a dread of death upon me; I know not how near it may be, but it is too near, I know, and I am not prepared for it. I am overwhelmed with thoughts of the judgment to come. I hear the trump ringing in my ears when I am at my work. I hear the messengers of God's justice summoning me and saying, 'Come to judgment, come to judgment, come away.' A fearful sound is in mine ears, and I, whither shall I go?" Hear, O man, and be comforted, for now is the appointed time for thee to seek the Lord, for our text says, "When all these things are come upon thee, if thou turn unto the Lord thy God, he will not forsake thee neither destroy thee."

There is yet one more word which appears to me to contain great comfort in it, and it is this, "*even in the latter days.*" This expression may refer to the latter days of Jewish history, though I can scarcely think it does, because the Jews are not now guilty of idolatry. I rather think it must refer to the latter days of any one of their captivities and in our case to the latter days of life. Looking around me I see that many of you are advanced in years, and if you are unconverted I thank God I am as free to preach Christ to you as if you had been children or young men. If you have spent sixty or seventy years in rebellion against your God, you may return "*even in the latter days.*" If your day is almost over, and you have arrived at the eleventh hour, when the sun touches the horizon, and evening shadows thicken, still he may call you into his vineyard and at the close of the day give you your penny. He is longsuffering and full of mercy, not willing that any should perish, and therefore he sends me out as his messenger to assure you that if you seek him he will be found of you, "*even in the latter days.*" It is a beautiful sight, though it is mingled with much sadness, to see a very old man become a babe in Christ. It is sweet to see him, after he has been so many years the proud, wayward, self-confident master of himself, at last learning wisdom, and sitting at Jesus' feet. They hang up in the cathedrals and public halls old banners which have long been carried by the enemy into the thick of the fight. If they have been torn by shot and shell, so much the more do the captors value them: the older the standard the more honour is it, it seems, to seize it as a trophy. Men boast when they have carried off—

"The flag that braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze."

Oh, how I wish that my Lord and Master would lay hold on some of you worn-out sinners, you who have been set up by the devil as standards

of sin. O that the Prince of the kings of the earth would compel you to say, "Love conquers even me."

I will not leave this head till I have said that it gives me great joy to be allowed to preach an immediate gospel to you—a gospel which bids you turn unto God and find present salvation. Suppose for a moment that the gospel ran thus,—“You, sinner, shall be saved in twelve months time if you turn to God.” Oh, sirs, I should count the days for you till the twelve months were gone. If it were written, “I will be found of you in March, 1877,” I should weary over you till the auspicious season arrived, and say, “Mayhap they will die before mercy’s hour has struck; spare them, good Lord.” Yes, and if it were true that God would not hear you until next Sabbath-day I should like to lock you up and keep you out of harm’s way, if I could, till that time arrived, lest you should die before the promised hour. If there were any way of insuring your lives, though you had to give all that you have for your soul, you might be glad to insure your life till next Lord’s-day. But, blessed be God, the promise does not tarry; it is now! “To-day if ye will hear his voice.” The gospel does not even bid you wait till you reach your home, or get to your bedside, but here and now, in that pew and at this moment, if you seek him with all your heart, and with all your soul, the Lord Jesus will be found of you, and present salvation shall be immediately enjoyed. Is it not encouraging to think that *just now* the Lord is waiting to be gracious.

II. But now, secondly, let us look at THE WAY APPOINTED. To find mercy, what are we bidden to do? “If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God.” We have not, then, to bring anything to God, but to seek *him*. We have not to seek a righteousness to bring to him, nor seek a state of heart which will fit us for him, but to seek *him* at once. Sinner, you have offended God, none but God can forgive you, for the offences are against himself. Seek him, then, that he may forgive you. It is essential that you seek him as a real existence, and a true person, believing that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. It is all in vain to seek sacraments, you must seek *him*: it is idle to go through forms of prayer, or to utter customary phrases of devotion, you must seek *him*. Your salvation lies in God, sinner, and your seeking must be after God. Do you understand this? It is not going to your priest or to your clergyman, or to your Bible or to your Prayer-book, or even to your knees in formal prayer; but you must draw near to God in Christ Jesus, and he must be found of you as a man finds a treasure and takes it to be his own. “But where shall I find him?” saith one. When they sought God of old they went to the mercy-seat, for there the Lord had promised to speak with them. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ is that mercy-seat, sprinkled with precious blood, and if you want to find God, you must seek him in the person of Jesus Christ. Is it not written: “No man cometh unto the Father but by me!” Jesus is the one Mediator between God and man, and if you would find God, you must find him in the person of Jesus the Nazarene, who is also the Son of the Highest. You will find Jesus by believing him, trusting him, resting upon him. When you have trusted Jesus, you have found God in Jesus, for he hath said, “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.” Then have you come to God when you have believed in Jesus

Christ. How simple this is ! How unencumbered with subtleties and difficulties ! When God gives grace, how easy and how plain is believing. Salvation is not by doing, nor by being, nor by feeling, but simply by believing. We are not to be content with self, but to seek the Lord. Being nothing in ourselves, we are to go out of ourselves to him. Being ourselves unworthy, we are to find worthiness in Jesus.

We are also to grasp the Lord as ours, for the text says, "Thou shalt seek the Lord *thy God*." Sinners, that is a part of saving faith, to take God to be your God ; if he is only another man's God, he cannot save you ; he must be yours, yours, assuredly yours, yours to trust and love and serve all your days, or you will be lost.

Now, mark God's directions : "If thou seek him *with all thy heart and with all thy soul*." There must be no pretence about this seeking. If you desire to be saved, there must be no playing and toying, trifling and feigning. The search must be real, sincere, and earnest, fervent, intense, thorough-going, or it will be a failure. Is this too much to ask ? Surely if anything in the world deserves earnestness it is this. If anything ought to arouse all a man's powers to energy, it is the salvation of his soul. You cannot win gold and attain riches without being in earnest in the pursuit : but what earnestness does this deserve ? This obtaining eternal life, deliverance from eternal death, acceptance in the beloved, endless bliss ? Oh, men, if you sleep over anything, at any rate be awake here ! If you trifle upon any matters of importance, yet here at any rate be serious, solemn, and earnest. Here there must be no idling and no delay. Note that there is a repetition in the text. "If thou seek him *with all thy heart and with all thy soul*," we must be doubly in earnest, heart and soul must be in the pursuit. Half-hearted seeking is no seeking at all. To ask for mercy from God and at the same time to be willing to be without it is a mere pretence of asking. If you are content to be put off with an inferior blessing, you are not seeking the Lord at all. I remember one who is now a member of this church who in a desperate fit of soul anxiety said solemnly to one of us, "I will never go to work again, I will neither eat nor drink till I have found the Saviour," and with that solemn resolve it was not long before he had found him. Oh, sirs, suppose you should be lost. Suppose you should perish while I am speaking ! I know of no reason why your pulse should continue to beat, or your breath should remain in your nostrils, and if at this moment you were to die, at that selfsame instant you would plunge amidst the flames of hell. Escape then at once. Even now make soul matters your sole concern. Whatever else you have to attend to, leave it alone, and attend first to this chief thing, the salvation of your soul. If a man were in a sinking vessel, he may have been a student of the classics, but he will not think of his stopping to translate an ode of Horace : he may have been a mathematician, but he will not sit down to work out an equation ; he will leap at once from the sinking vessel into the boat, for his object will be to save his life. And should it not be so as to our eternal life ? My soul, my soul, this must be saved, and with all my heart will I seek to God in Jesus Christ that I may find salvation.

The text further adds that we are to turn to him. Did you notice the thirtieth verse—"If thou turn to the Lord *thy God*." It must be a

thorough turn. You are looking now towards the world—you must turn in the opposite direction, and look Godward. It must not be an apparent turn, but a real change of the nature, a turning of the entire soul; a turning with repentance for the past, with confidence in Christ for the present, and with holy desires for the future. Heart, soul, life, speech, action, all must be changed. Except ye be converted ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. May God grant you such a turn as this, and to this end do you pray, “Turn me, and I shall be turned.”

Then it is added, “*and be obedient to his voice,*” for we cannot be saved in disobedience: Christ is not come to save his people in their sins, but from their sins. “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword.” Do you see, my dear unconverted hearers, what God’s advice is to you? It is that now you obey his gospel, and bow before the sceptre of his Son Jesus. He would have you own that you have erred, and entreat to be kept from erring again. Your proud self-will must yield, and your self-confidence must be renounced, and you must incline your ear and come unto him, “Hear and your soul shall live.” This his Holy Spirit will grant you grace to do. This is the least that could be asked of you; you could not expect the great King to pardon rebels and allow them to continue in rebellion: he could not allow you to continue in sin and yet partake of his grace. You know that such a course would not be worthy of a holy God.

Do you feel inclined at this moment to turn to the Lord? Does some gentle power, you have never felt before, draw you beyond yourself? Do you perceive that it would be well for you to be reconciled to your God and Father? Do you feel some kindlings of regret, some sparks of good desire? Then yield to the impulse: I trust it is the Holy Spirit within, working in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure. Yield at once: completely yield, and he will lead you by a way you know not, and bring you to Jesus, and in him shall find peace and rest, holiness, happiness, and heaven. Let this be the happy day. Bend before the Spirit’s breath as the reed bows in the wind. Quench not the Spirit, grieve him no more—

“Lest slighted once the season fair
Should ne’er return again.”

Beware lest bleeding love should never woo again, lest pitying grace should never more entreat, and tender mercy should never more cast its cords around you. The spouse said, “Draw me, we will run after thee,” do you say the same. Behold, before you there is an open door, and within that door a waiting Saviour, will you perish on the threshold?

III. Thirdly, the text contains **VERY RICH ENCOURAGEMENTS**. How does it run? “For the Lord thy God is a merciful God; *he will not forsake thee.*” Catch at that sinner, “He will not forsake thee.” If he were to say, “Let him alone, Ephraim is given unto idols,” it would be all over with you; but if you seek him he will not say, “Let him alone,” nor take his Holy Spirit from you. You are not yet given up, I hope, or you would not have been here this morning to hear this sermon.

I thought when I woke this morning, and saw the snow and pitiless

select driven by a vehement wind, that it was a pity I had studied such a subject, for I would like to have the house crowded with sinners, and they are not so likely to come out in bad weather. Just then I recollected that it was upon just such a morning as this that I found the Saviour myself, and that thought gave me much courage in coming here. I thought the congregation cannot be smaller than that of which I made one on that happy day when I looked to Christ. I believe that many will this morning be bought out and saved, for the Lord has not forsaken this congregation. I used to think he had given me up, and would not show me mercy after so long seeking in vain; but he had not forsaken me, nor has he cast you off, O sinner! If you seek him with all your heart, you may rest assured he will not forsake you.

And then it is added, "*Neither destroy thee.*" You have been afraid he would; you have often thought the earth would open and swallow you; you have been afraid to fall asleep lest you should never wake again; but the Lord will not destroy you; nay rather he will reveal his saving power in you.

There is a sweeter word still in the 29th verse: "*Thou shalt find him if thou seek him.*" I wish I could sing, and could extemporize a bit of music, for then I would stand here and sing those words: "Thou shalt find him if thou seek him." At any rate, the words have sweet melody in them to my ear and heart—"Thou shalt find him if thou seek him." I should like to whisper that sentence softly to the sick, and to shout it to the busy. It ought to linger long in your memories, and abide in your hearts—"Thou shalt find him if thou seek him." What more, poor sinner, what more dost thou want?

Then there are two reasons given: "*For the Lord thy God is a merciful God.*" Oh, guilty soul, the Lord does not want to damn you, he does not desire to destroy you. Judgment is his strange work. Have you ever had to chasten your child? When you have felt bound to punish severely by reason of a great fault, has it not been very hard work? You have said to yourself a hundred times over, "What shall I do? What shall I do to escape from the misery of causing pain to my dear child?" You have been driven to chasten him or you would not have done it. God never sends a sinner to hell till justice demands it. He finds no joy in punishing. He swears, "*As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.*" Look at the judge when he puts on the black cap, does he do so with pleasure? Nay, some of our judges speak with choked utterance and with many tears when they say to the prisoner, "You must be taken to the place from whence you came, there to be hanged by the neck till you are dead." God never puts on the black cap without his heart yearning for men. His mercy endureth for ever, and he delighteth in it.

Notice how the Lord teacheth us his care even over the most guilty by the comparisons he makes. "What man of you," says he, "having a sheep gone astray will not go after it until he find it? What man of you having a sheep that is fallen into a ditch will not pull it out?" Any animal which belongs to us causes us concern if we lose it, or it is in trouble. I noticed the other night how even the little kitten could not be missing without causing anxiety to the household. What calling and searching! Rougher natures might say, "if the kitten will keep out of

doors all night, let it do so." But the owner thought not so, for the night was cold and wet. I have seen great trouble when a bird has been lost through the opening of a cage door, and many a vain struggle to catch it again. What a stir there is in the house about a little short-lived animal. We do not like to lose a bird, or a kitten, and do you think the good God will willingly lose those whom he has made in his own image, and who are to exist for ever? I have used a very simple and homely illustration, but it commends itself to the heart. You know what you would do to regain a lost bird, and what will not God do to save a soul! An immortal spirit is better than ten thousand birds. Does God care for souls? Ay, that he does, and in proof thereof Jesus has come to seek and to save the lost. The Shepherd cannot rest while one of his flock is in danger. "It is only one sheep! You have ninety-nine more, good man, why do you fret and bother yourself about one?" He cannot be pacified. He is considering where that sheep may be. He imagines all sorts of perils and distresses. Perhaps it is lying on its back, and cannot turn over, or it has fallen into a pit, or is entangled among briars, or the wolf is ready to seize it. It is not merely its intrinsic value to him, but he is concerned for it because it is *his* sheep, and the object of his care. Oh, soul, God has such a care for man. He waits to be gracious, and his Spirit goes forth towards sinners; therefore return to him.

Now dwell upon that last argument—"He will not forget the covenant of thy fathers." The covenant always keeps open the path between God and man. The Lord has made a covenant concerning poor sinners with his Son Jesus Christ. He has laid help upon one that is mighty, and given him for a covenant to the people. He evermore remembers Jesus, and how he kept that covenant; he calls to mind his sighs, and tears, and groans, and death-throes, and he fulfils his promise for the great Sufferer's sake. God's grace has kept his covenant on the behalf of men: God is even eager to forgive that he may reward Christ, and give him to see of the travail of his soul. Now, hearken unto me, ye who are still unconverted. What solid ground there is here for your hope. If the Lord were to deal with you according to the covenant of works, what could he do but destroy you? But there is a covenant of grace made in Jesus Christ on the behalf of sinners, and all that believe in Jesus are interested in that covenant and are made partakers of the countless blessings which that covenant secures. Believe thou in Jesus. Cast thyself upon him, and by the covenant mercies of God thou shalt assuredly be saved.

You have heard me preach like this before, have you not, a good many times? Yes, and I am sometimes fearful lest God's people should grow tired of this kind of sermon: but then *you* need it over and over again. How many more times will some of you want to be told this? How many more times must the great mercy of God be set before you? Are we to keep on inviting you again and again and again and go back with no favourable answer from you? I have been questioning myself in the night watches about this, and I have said, "These people are unconverted, is it my fault? Do I fail in telling them my Lord's message? Do I mar the gospel?" Well, I thought, "If it be so, yet I will charge them not to be partakers of my fault." Brothers and

sisters, God's mercy is so rich that, even when the story of it is badly told, it ought to influence your hearts. It is so grand a thing that God should be in Christ reconciling the world to himself by a wondrous sacrifice, that if I stuttered and stammered you ought to be glad to hear it; or even if I told you in terms that were obscure you ought to be so eager to know it that you would search out my meaning. In secret correspondence a cipher is often used, but inquisitive people soon discover it, ought there not to be yet more interest taken in the gospel? But, my friends, I do not speak obscurely. I am as plain a speaker as one might meet in a day's march, and with all my heart I set Christ before you, and bid you trust him; will you do so this morning, or will you not? See how dark it is outside, even at noon-day. God has hung the very heavens in mourning. Never fear, the sun will soon break forth and light up the day; and even so

"Our hearts, if God we seek to know
Shall know him, and rejoice;
His coming like the morn shall be,
As morning songs his voice.

So shall his presence bless our souls,
And shed a joyful light;
That hallow'd morn shall chase away
The sorrows of the night."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Deuteronomy iv.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SEALING OF THE SPIRIT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 19TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."—Ephesians i. 13, 14.

I HAVE taken the whole passage for the sake of completing the sense, but I have no intention whatever of preaching upon all of it. Practically I only need for the topic of this morning the following words:—"In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." The sealing of the Holy Spirit will be the subject of our meditation. There are many who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ who are extremely anxious to obtain some token for good, some witness from God which shall render them quite sure that they are saved. They have not yet reached the full assurance of faith, and they feel uneasy till they attain it. They feel that these matters are too important to be left at all uncertain, and they, therefore, pine for some sure witness or seal. Men will not risk their estates, and no spiritually sensible man will endure to have his soul and its eternal affairs in jeopardy for an hour: hence this anxiety. It is true that by the way of faith only the fullest and best assurance may be reached, but many who do truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are not yet aware of this, and their trembling hearts crave for a testimonial from the infallible God to certify them that they are indeed saved. Yes, and I conceive that even more advanced saints, who know more fully where their standing is, and confess that they can only walk by faith, yet often sing with very great emphasis of desire—

"Might I but hear thy heavenly tongue
But whisper '*Thou art mine*,'
That cheerful word should raise my song
To notes almost divine."

Though we can and do believe, and can claim the privilege which belongs to those who have not seen and yet have believed, yet we would be glad to
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have a sight sometimes. We sometimes wish we could know by some mark and evidence and token that our experience is after all a reality, and that we are indeed born of God.

"O tell me that my worthless name
Is graven on thy hands!
Show me some promise in thy book
Where my salvation stands!"

Now, in the best sense, this seal which we seek after is to be had; nay, it is manifestly seen by many of God's children. It does not supersede faith, but it rewards and strengthens it. There is a way by which God does speak to his own, and assure them that they are his; there is a pledge, and an earnest, and this is freely given to the people of God. May God's own Spirit enable me to speak aright upon this weighty subject.

The text says, "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise;" and, therefore, first, I shall call your attention to *the position of this sealing*; secondly, to *the benefits which arise out of it*; and thirdly, to *the sealing itself*, which, indeed, I shall endeavour to explain all through.

I. First, let us speak of **THE POSITION OF THIS SEALING**. We are desirous to get some confirming seal from God set upon our souls, some sure token that we are indeed his own people. That sealing we can have, God does bestow it; but let us notice very carefully, lest we make a mistake, where that sealing comes in. *It does not come before believing*. According to the text it is "after that ye believed, ye were sealed." Now, there are hundreds of persons who are craving for something to see or to feel before they will believe in Jesus Christ; this is wickedness, and the result of an unbelief which is most offensive in the sight of God. If you demand a token before you believe, you practically say that you cannot take God's bare word for your comfort, that the sure word of testimony recorded in the Bible is not enough for you, that the solemn declaration of God may after all be false; at any rate, that you find it impossible to repose your confidence upon that alone, and must see something beside. If not a miracle, perhaps you demand a dream, or a strange feeling, or a mysterious operation; at any rate, if you do not see some sign and wonder, you declare that you will not believe. You do, in fact, say to God, "If thou wilt not go out of thy way to give me what I ask, and to do for me what I demand, then I will call thee a liar to thy face, by refusing to believe on thee." Ah, my hearer, this will not do; this is to provoke the Lord to jealousy, and he that doeth this shall receive no token whatsoever, except it be the sign of the unbelievers of Chorazin, for whom the day of judgment shall be more intolerable than for Sodom and Gomorrah.

Note also that this sealing *does not necessarily come at once with faith*. It grows out of faith, and comes "after that ye believed." We are not in every case sealed at the moment when we first trust in Jesus. I am persuaded that many who believe in Jesus enter into peace directly, and perceive at once the blessed assurance which is involved in their possessing the Holy Spirit; but with many others it is not so. I have frequently been asked this question, "What is a person to do who does believe in Jesus, but yet is not conscious of peace and joy, but is filled

with such a conflict within that the utmost he can do is to cling to Jesus with trembling hope?" I have replied, "If you believe in Jesus Christ you are saved; the best evidence that you are saved lies in the assurance of the word of God that every believer has eternal life." Whether you *feel* that you are justified or not is not the point, you are to accept God's word, which assures you that every one that believeth is justified: you are bound to believe the testimony of God apart from the supporting evidence of inward experience, and if it were possible for you to be a believer by the year together, and yet to find no peace, still you would have no right to doubt what God says because you do not feel peace, but you are bound to hold on to God's promise whether you enjoy peace or not. My firm belief is that where there is a real faith in the promise of God, peace and the other fruits of the Spirit come as a necessary ultimate consequence, but even then they are not grounds of faith: the word of the Lord is the sole foundation upon which faith builds. Some people have a sort of confidence in God, but they are also looking out for confirming signs, and they spoil the simplicity of their faith by having one eye on Christ and another eye on their peace of mind. Now, my friend, this will never do. You are bound to believe in God as he is revealed in Christ Jesus unto salvation, altogether apart from peace, joy, or anything else. The witness of the Spirit within is not the ground nor the cause of our faith: faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. I, being a sinner, believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and I rest my soul upon him, believing that he will save me; this is to be my standing, seal or no seal, token or no token. My dependence is not to be upon the seal of the Spirit, but upon the blood of the Son. The Spirit of God never takes the place of the Redeemer, he exercises his own peculiar office, which is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, and not to put his own things in the place of Jesus. The foundation of our hope is laid in Christ from first to last, and if we rest there we are saved. The seal does not always come with faith, but it follows after. I have said this because I am afraid lest in any way whatever you should leave the simple, plain, and solid ground of confidence in the finished work of Jesus Christ, and in that only. Recollect that a man who believes in Jesus Christ is as truly saved when he does not know it as he is when he does know it; he is as truly the Lord's when he mourns in the valley of humiliation as when he sings on the mountain top of joy and fellowship. Our ground of trust is not to be found in our experience, but in the person and work of our Lord Jesus.

"I dare not trust the sweetest frame;
But wholly lean on Jesus' name:
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

Note, also, as to the position of this sealing, that, while it is not the first, *it is not the last thing in the divine life*. It comes after believing, but when you obtain it there is something yet to follow. Perhaps you have had the notion that if you could once be told from the mouth of God himself that you were saved, you would then lie down and cease from life's struggle. It is clear, therefore, that such an assurance would

be an evil thing for you, for a Christian is never more out of place than when he dreams that he has ceased from conflict. The natural, fit, and proper position for a soldier of Jesus Christ is to be at war with sin. We are wrestlers, and our normal condition is that of "striving according to his working who worketh in us mightily." This side heaven, if there be a place for nest-building and ease-taking it is not the place for you : you are a pilgrim, and a pilgrim's business is to be on the road, pressing forward to the home beyond. Remember, if there be seats of ease, and no doubt there are, they are not for you, since you are a runner in a great race, with heaven and earth for witnesses. Cessation from watchfulness means ruin to your soul, the closing of conflict would show that you could never gain the victory, and perfect rest on earth would show that none remained for you in heaven. Even if the Spirit of God seal you, what will it amount to ? To the inheritance itself, so that you can say, "I have attained perfection" ? Certainly not. No, brethren, the Scripture says, "Which is *the earnest* of our inheritance till the redemption of the purchased possession." This side heaven all you cannot obtain is an earnest of the perfection of which heaven is made up.

"There rest shall follow toil,
And ease succeed to care :
The victors there divide the spoil ;
They sing and triumph there."

Here we must labour, watch, run, fight, wrestle, agonise ; all our forces, strengthened by the Eternal Spirit, must be expended in this high enterprise, striving to enter in at the strait gate : when we have obtained the sealing our warfare is not ended, we have only then received a foretaste of the victory, for which we must still fight on.

This is the true position of the sealing. It stands between the grace which enables us to believe, and the glory which is our promised inheritance.

II. We will notice, secondly, what are THE BENEFITS OF THIS SEALING, and while we are so doing, we shall be compelled to state what we think that sealing is, though that is to be the subject of the third head. The sealing spoken of in the text does not make the promises of God to be true. Please to notice that. This text has been preached upon as though it stated that the Spirit of God set his seal upon the gospel and the promises of God. Well, dear friends, it is true that the Spirit of God witnesses to the truth, and to the sureness of the promises, but that is evidently not intended here, for the text says, not that the promises were sealed, but that "ye were sealed." You are the writing which has the stamp put upon it ; you yourselves are sealed. It is not even stated that the Spirit of God seals up covenant blessings as gold is sealed up in a bag, and reserves them for the chosen seed ; the text tells us that believers themselves are thus reserved, and marked as the Lord's peculiar treasure, and it is upon believers themselves that this seal of the Holy Spirit is set. No, brethren, the Holy Spirit does not make the promises sure, they are sure of themselves ; God that cannot lie has uttered them, and therefore they cannot fail. Nor, my brethren, does the Holy Spirit make sure our interest in those promises ; that interest in the promises was sure in the divine decree, or ever the

earth was, and is a matter of fact which cannot be changed. The promises are already sure to all the seed. *The Holy Spirit makes us sure that the word is true* and that we are concerned in it; but the promise was sure beforehand, and our interest in that promise was sure, too, from the moment in which it was bestowed upon us by the sovereign act of God.

To understand our text, you must notice that it is bounded by two words, "*In whom*," which two words are twice given in this verse. "In whom after that ye believed, ye were sealed." What is meant by "In whom"? The words signify "In Christ." It is *in Christ* that the people of God are sealed. We must therefore understand this sealing as it would relate to Christ, since so far, and so far only, can it relate to us. Was our Lord sealed? Turn to John vi. 27, and there you have this exhortation: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for *him hath God the Father sealed*." There is the clue to our text. "Him hath God the Father sealed:" for since our sealing is in him, it must be the same sealing.

Notice, then, first, that the ever-blessed Son was sealed on the Father's part by *God's giving a testimony* to him that he was indeed his own Son, and the sent one of the Lord. As when a king issues a proclamation, he sets his seal manual to it to say, "This is mine;" so when the Father sent his Son into the world, he gave him this testimony, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He said this in words, but how did he give a perpetual testimony by a seal, which should be with him throughout life? It was by anointing him with the Holy Spirit. The seal that Jesus was the Messiah was that the Spirit of God rested upon him without measure. Hence we read expressions like these: "He was justified in the Spirit," "He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." Now, the Spirit of God, wherever it abides upon a man, is *the* mark that that man is accepted of God. We say not that where the Spirit merely strives at intervals there is any seal of divine favour, but where he abides it is assuredly so. The very fact that we possess the Spirit of God is God's testimony and seal in us that we are his, and that as he has sent his Son into the world, even so does he send us into the world.

Secondly, to our Lord Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit was a seal *for his own encouragement*. Our Lord condescended to restrain the power of his own Godhead, and as a servant he depended upon the Father for support. When he began his ministry he encouraged himself thus—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." He found his stimulus of service, he found the authorisation of his service, he found his comfort and strength for service, in the fact that God had given him the Holy Spirit. This was his joy. Now, brothers and sisters, if we want to be encouraged for holy service by feeling quite sure that we are saved, where must we get that encouragement from? Read in the First Epistle of John, the third chapter and twenty-fourth verse, and there the seal of God is described—"Hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us." Read also in the fourth chapter, verse 13, "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, because he hath given us of his Spirit." So

that as the seal which comforted our Lord, and made him to know in times of depression that he was indeed beloved of the Father, was that he had the Spirit of God; so to you and to me, brethren, the possession of the Spirit of God is our continuous encouragement, for by this we may know beyond all question that we dwell in God and God dwelleth in us. The seal answers a two-fold purpose; it is on God's part a testimony, and to us an encouragement.

But the seal is meant to be *an evidence to others*. The Father set his seal upon his Son in order that others might discern that he was indeed sent of God. John says, "I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, *and remaining* on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." The Spirit, then, was upon our Lord the seal for recognition; and, beloved, so must it be with us. We cannot be known by our fellow Christians except by the possession of the Spirit of God. Have you ever noticed how Peter claimed for the uncircumcised the rights of church membership in the fifteenth of Acts and the eighth and ninth verses? He says, "God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith": so that to Peter the possession of the Holy Spirit was the broad seal of heaven which the Lord never sets upon a heart wherein there is no faith. The same argument had been felt in all its power by him when he said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Paul used this as his test concerning the sons of men; for in Romans viii. 9, he says, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his;" plainly indicating that the absence of the Spirit is fatal, for the divine signature is not at the bottom of the document; but if the Spirit of God be there, then all is right, for the Lord never puts his seal to anything which is not sound and true. Rest quite sure that where the Spirit of God abides there the gospel of Jesus Christ has been written on the heart, and the man is saved.

Further, the fourth effect of the seal upon Christ was that *it was to the world a witness*. The Spirit of God upon Jesus Christ was not recognised by the ungodly world to be indeed divine, but they perceived and were astonished at a something about him which they did not understand. He spake with authority and not as the scribes, and they confessed "Never man spake like this man." They did not know what spirit he was of, but they knew they hated it, and straightway they began to oppose him. Now, brothers and sisters, if you have the same seal as your Lord, which is described in the text as "the Spirit of promise," the same result will follow: men will wonder at you, misunderstand you, and oppose you. And what is the reason? Never in this world did the Spirit of promise appear without opposition from the spirit of bondage. Isaac was the child of promise, and did not Ishmael, who was born after the flesh, persecute him? The two seeds, of the flesh and of the promise, are at daggers drawing with each other. When the Lord sets his seal upon you by giving you the Spirit of promise, so that you

are not under the law but under Christ, the world will know it; they will not admire you, but they will strive against you to destroy you.

Once more, the seal upon our Lord Jesus Christ was intended for a fifth reason, namely—for his perseverance even to the end. A seal is set upon a treasure which we mean to preserve; and so was the precious Redeemer sealed. Now, you will say to me, "But dare we speak of Jesus Christ as being preserved by the Spirit of God?" My dear brethren, we must never forget the wonderful self-denial of Christ in that he laid aside his own divine power, and while he was in this world he said the Father was greater than he, and he became a man so as to pray, and to believe, and to depend upon the Father. Jesus Christ put himself into such a condition while he was here that he relied upon the Spirit of God to uphold him. Do you doubt it? Turn to the forty-second of Isaiah, and you there get it in express words: "Behold my servant whom I uphold!" See how he puts himself, as a servant, to be upheld by the Lord. "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. he shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street: a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." There can be no doubt that this is Christ; for these very words are quoted concerning himself. Now, what comes of the upholding of the blessed Spirit? "He shall not fail nor be discouraged until he hath set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law." So that the Spirit of God upheld Christ, and sustained him, and kept him, till his life's work was finished, without his failing or being discouraged. My brethren, this is how you and I must be kept; this is the seal which we need, which shall preserve us as the consecrated ones of God, so that when he cometh, he shall find us under seal and safe.

Let me now recapitulate. Upon our Lord Jesus the Spirit of God acted as a seal, namely, as God's testimony that he was his Son, as an encouragement to his own heart, as an evidence to others, as a witness to the world, and as a help to perseverance, even to the end. The like benefits will the sealing of the Spirit confer upon us: "in Christ Jesus after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

III. Thirdly, let us consider THE SEALING ITSELF. A great deal has been said on this point which has tended to foster superstition. Some have supposed that there is a separate act of the Spirit of God in which he seals believers. It may be so, I will not raise the question; but I should be very sorry if any man here, living in sin, should nevertheless look back upon some time of religious excitement or enjoyment and say, "I am safe, for on that occasion I was sealed;" and I should be very sorry to have any brother take as the sure reason why he is saved some remarkable experience which he underwent on a certain day long past. A seal is for the present, and is not a mere memory, but an object palpable now, and before the eyes. I am afraid many have been deceived into carelessness by the notion of a sealing received long ago. Let us seek out the truth. According to the text, as far as I can read it, here is a man who has believed in Jesus, and he desires a seal that God loves him: God gives him the Spirit, and that is all the seal he can wish for or expect. Nothing more is wanted, nothing else would be so good.

The very fact that the Spirit of God works in you to will and to do according to God's good pleasure, is your seal ; you do not require anything beyond. I do not say that any one operation of the Holy Spirit is to be regarded as the seal, but the whole of them together, as they prove his being within us, make up that seal. It is better, however, to keep to the doctrine that the Spirit of God in the believer is himself the seal.

"Thou art the earnest of his love,
The pledge of joys to come,
And thy soft wings, celestial dove,
Will safe convey me home."

Now, let us look at what the context tells us about this. If you read on, the apostle tells us that *wisdom and revelation* in the knowledge of God are part of the seal. Kindly turn to the chapter and follow out the apostle's line of argument. He says, (verse 15), "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith, etc., cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers ; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." See, then, if ye have believed in Jesus Christ the Spirit of God comes upon you, and he gives you wisdom and revelation. Doctrines in the Word which you never understood before become clear to you—"the eyes of your understanding being enlightened ;" the blessings promised are more distinctly discerned, and you see "the hope of your calling, and the riches of the glory of the Lord's inheritance in the saints." The deeper truths, which at first quite staggered and puzzled you, gradually open up to you, and you see and appreciate them. More especially you discover the glory of Christ and see the exceeding greatness of the power with which the Lord works in the saints "according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come." You drink deep into the blessed thought that Jesus is the head over all things to his church, and you obtain some glimpses into the mysterious doctrine that the church "is his fulness, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Now, brethren, if we know these things aright the Spirit has taught us, and the consequence of it is that we say to ourselves, "Certainly I must be a child of God, for I never understood the things of God before." How could I have learned them if I had not been taught of God. The Master seems to stand by our side and say, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." If you have been made to see the abounding grace of God, the grandeur of the plan of salvation, and the choice beauties of the blessed person of Jesus Christ, you have a sure seal upon your soul, for like the blind man in the gospels you can say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind now I see."

Following on to the next chapter you will see that the Spirit of God works in every man who possesses him *life*, and that life becomes another form of the seal. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin." That life is of a new kind, and has a renewing power, so that

men forsake the course of this world, and no longer fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind. This new life they trace to God, who is rich in mercy, who in his great love wherewith he loved them, even when they were dead in sins, hath quickened them together with Christ. They trace this life entirely to the grace of God,—“by grace are ye saved”; and they see that this life produces in them good works, “for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” I need not explain how this life uplifts us to sit in the heavenlies with Christ, for most of you know all about it; you have received a life from above, a living and incorruptible seed is in you, you have passed into a new world, you have feelings, desires, fears, hopes, such as you never knew before, and thus your outward life is also changed, so that you follow after that which is according to the will of God. Now, brethren, what can be a better seal to you that you are indeed saved than this life which you feel within. This is the way in which the Spirit of God seals you, by making you partakers of the divine life, which never did reside in the unbeliever yet, and never can dwell apart from faith. To “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name.” “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” So that wisdom and life, which are both sure results of the indwelling of the Spirit of God, are a seal to us that we are really saved.

Go on a little further and you will notice upon the one seal a further mark, namely—*fellowship*. “Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” Those who have believed in Jesus Christ are led by the Spirit of God to love their fellow Christians, and thus “we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Once we thought the godly a dull and melancholy set, at any rate we let them go their own way, and we were glad to keep aloof from them; but now we delight in their society, sympathize with their pursuits, and are willing to share their persecutions. We count the saints of God the best company in the world; we would sooner sit down and talk half an hour with a poor, bed-ridden Christian woman, than be found in the courts of princes. This brotherly love becomes a seal of grace within our hearts, for John tells us in his first epistle, “every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us,” 1 John iv. 7, 12.

Even more striking is that which follows, namely, that we have *fellowship with God*. The apostle speaks of us as reconciled unto God by the cross, by which the enmity is slain, and he says of our Lord, “Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” I am following the course of the chapter. When you and I feel that we commune with God, that there is no quarrel between him and us, that he is loved of us as we are loved of him, that we can draw near to him in prayer and speak to him, that he hears us and deigns to grant us

gracious answers of peace, these are blessed seals of salvation. Some of us can look back on times of fellowship with God, on seasons of prevailing prayer with him, and upon countless answers to our petitions: all these become to us infallible tokens of divine love.

I shall not tire you if I bid you notice for one moment that the apostle puts in next *upbuilding*,—"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Are you not conscious, believers, that you are being built up unto a divinely glorious form, after a high and noble model? It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but you must be conscious that course upon course of precious stones have been builded upon the foundation of your faith in Christ. Since you have known the Lord you have made a distinct advance. At times you are afraid you have only grown downwards, but you have grown; there is a something about you now which was not there ten years ago. I am distinctly conscious, somehow, that twenty years ago I was not what I now am. I sometimes feel like a bird in the eggshell! I am chipping it away bit by bit, I believe it will break one of these days, and the bird will come out; but I often feel my wings fretted and cramped by the shell; I want the life in me to be developed and set free. Do you never feel the same? Have you not felt as if you yourself were big with a far more glorious nature, and longed for deliverance from flesh and frailty. These groanings, aspirations, hopes, and desires are all seals of salvation; you will never find the ungodly thus moved. These pangs are peculiar to life. You are not a finished structure, but a house in process of erection, and you may be sure that one of these days the topstone shall be brought forth with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." But this upbuilding through the Spirit of God is the seal of the Spirit; it is to you the evidence that God has begun a good work in you, and is carrying it on.

Last of all, the second chapter finishes up by saying, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit;" and this seems to me to gather up all that I have said before. The *indwelling* of the Spirit in the saints, in the whole of them united, and in each one in particular, is a choice seal.

"Dost thou not dwell in all the saints,
And seal them heirs of heaven?"

Yes, that is the manner of the sealing, according to the prayer of our hymn—

"Jesus, my Lord, reveal
In charms of grace divine,
And be thyself the sacred seal,
That pearl of price is mine."

If you have the Spirit of God dwelling in you, you must be the Lord's. Will the Spirit of God dwell in any temple but that which God has consecrated? He may come upon men to strive with them for awhile, but he will never *dwell* in any heart that has not been cleansed with the blood of Jesus, nor can he possibly reside permanently in any soul which is defiled with self-righteousness and love of sin. No, beloved, if the Spirit of God dwell in you, you want no dreams, nor angels' whispers, nor noises in the air. The indwelling Spirit is the only seal you need. I put it to you, brothers and sisters, what more do you want? What more could God give you? Suppose you were to meet on the road home, standing on the snow, an angel, clothed in glittering white, and that he should say to you, "I have a message from God to you"—should then mention your name and add, "You are one of God's chosen." That vision would comfort you for half-an-hour, I have no doubt, but many desponding spirits would not be comforted much longer, for the devil would say, "It was snowing? No doubt the flakes blew into your eyes; or else you have a fine imagination." "Oh, but," you would say, "I heard him speak." "Ah, you had noises in your head; you are becoming a fair subject for Bedlam." I confess if you were to tell me the story, I should not make any bones about it, but should say, "You are not such a fool as to believe that, are you?" and you would find many other people of the same mind. Now there can be no doubt about the seal of the text. You have been taught of God what no one but the Spirit of God could have taught you; you have a life in you which no one but the Spirit could have given you: of that knowledge and that life you are perfectly conscious; you do not want to ask anybody else about them. A man may ask me whether I know so and so; but I am the best witness whether I do or not. If I am asked, "How do you know you are alive?" Well, I walk about, that is all; but I am quite sure about it, and I do not want any further evidence.

The best seal to a man's heart must be that of which he is conscious, and about which he needs not appeal to others. Give me a seal that is as sure as my own existence: I fail to see how God himself can give me anything more sure than the gift of his Spirit working knowledge and life in me. "Oh," says one, "but if I could hear a voice." Suppose you did. Then the argument of fear would be that there are countless voices, and one may be mistaken for another. You were in the street when you heard it; perhaps it was a parrot or a starling in the upper window. Who knows? It is so easy for the ear to be deceived. Many a time you have said, "I know I heard so and so," when you did not hear it, but something very like it. I would not believe my own ears, if their evidence had to do with my soul, one half so readily as I would believe my own consciousness. Since knowledge and life and other

things I have mentioned just now, are all matters of consciousness, they are much better seals than anything could be which appealed like an angelic vision to the eye, or like a mysterious voice to the ear. Here you have something sure and steadfast. If the Spirit of God dwell in you you are his, and if he dwell not in you you are none of his.

Take this for the closing word, "Grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption," but love him, honour him, and obey him; so will the seal always be bright before your eyes.

As to you who have not believed, I conclude with this sentence.—Do not ask for seals; you have nothing to do with seals, but with Jesus. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." Believe in Christ Jesus, and when you have trusted him, then shall there come signs, seals, marks. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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SIHON AND OG, OR MERCIES IN DETAIL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

"To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: and slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever: and gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever: even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever."—Psalm cxxxvi. 17—22.

THESE six verses iterate and reiterate the same fact; they rehearse and repeat the same reflection. Is the tautology tedious; do the chimes weary you with their monotony? Nay; but this is a veritable charm in poetry. When the poet touches upon some important theme, which illuminates his soul and kindles his nobler passions to a flame, he is very apt to dwell upon it with enthusiasm, constrained to pursue it with avidity, to follow it up with feeling, and echo it over and over again with strong and yet stronger emotion. Nobody feels that repetition is out of place in poetry, because in weal or woe, with pleasure or with pathos we dwell on the theme which awakens our sympathy. This psalm, of which the refrain is always the same,—“His mercy endureth for ever,” has in it several instances of this repetition. “To him that made great lights” is followed by “The sun to rule by day,” and by the next, “The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.” The repetition is natural and secures attention, the words are musical as they strike on our ears, and the style is not only allowable, but acceptable as a beautiful licence of the poetic school. For my part, I like a repetition in the tune of a psalm as well as in its language. There has sprung up a fashion in music now to cavil at repeats. I must confess I do not feel of the same mind as some who, when the psalm or hymn is given out, seem to say, “Now, let us go through it as hard as ever we can tear from beginning to end.” I prefer to chew some of the words—to have them come over again—to get the flavour of them in my mouth, or rather in my soul. For instance, an old tune like the one we have sung is none the worse

because it gives us the repeat of "his loving kindness." Such a word as that you would like to keep on repeating, if it were needful, a dozen times—

"His loving kindness, his loving kindness, oh, how good!"

A repeat ought to be considered rather a beauty than a blemish in music. There is, moreover, a reason for every repetition in Scripture, for we may say of the ornaments of poetry when we find them in the sacred volume that they are never mere ornaments. The repetitions, though elegant, are not merely flowers of rhetoric: they have a design. The Holy Spirit dwells upon a theme because he has an intention in so doing. My present purpose is to endeavour to show you why there should be six verses here when one verse might have sufficed. One might have been quite sufficient, it is clear. Suppose it had run thus—"Who slew famous kings, Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan, and gave their land for a heritage to his people: for his mercy endureth for ever." That would have comprehended all the sense; but the Holy Spirit did not judge that to be the best way of speaking, and so he divided it into six parts. He repeated it that there might be heard six times the refrain—"His mercy endureth for ever;" but not, I think, merely for the sake of repeating that beautiful truth so often; but for other reasons besides connected with the truth of which he was writing. *It is well to dwell long, and to dwell deliberately, upon some of God's dealings with us.* This is the theme on which I want to thread a few reflections.

I. And, first, IT IS WELL TO DELIBERATE LONG OVER THE MERCIFUL SIDE OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

One does not always see that he "slew mighty kings: for his mercy endureth for ever; and smote famous kings; for his mercy endureth for ever." It would have read more naturally if he had said, "Who smote mighty kings: for his *justice* endureth for ever: and slew famous kings; for his *vengeance* endureth for ever." The point to be brought out, however, was that there was mercy in these judgments. The Holy Spirit would have us know that there is mercy abroad in the world even—

"When God's right arm is bared for war,
And thunder clothes his cloudy car,"

The removal from the earth of these great oppressive kings, though it was terrible for them, was a great blessing. When tyrants die, nations have time to breathe. When great oppressors are cut off, it is as when a lion falls, or as when wolves are slain, and the deer and sheep have time to rest. Who knows how often, in answer to the tear of the slave, God has been pleased to smite his tyrant master. Mercy herself had brushed the tear from her eye, and said, "Smite, O God." Sometimes when we have read stories of oppression and tyranny, wrong, and violence, the gentlest among us, who would not have hurt a hair of a man's head, have been the very first to express indignation, and to marvel that God kept back the thunderbolt—that he did not pour vengeance on the adversary, and deliver the injured and down-trodden. If you read all through history and see how dynasties have crumbled and empires have melted away—could you but discern the secret

history of the nations, and how much there was of robbery and oppression, injustice and cruelty, you would understand that when emperor after emperor was slain in battle, or overtaken by sudden death, and king after king was swept from the throne, it was because God's mercy endureth for ever. It was not mercy to the one man, perhaps—to Nero, Caligula, Tiberius, or the like; but was it not mercy to the millions who had grown weary of his abominable rule? The sufferings of the helpless cried to God for redress. The moans and tears of serfs and vassals, prisoners and captives, presented their wretchedness before him, till his mercy linked hands with his wrath, and he smote great kings, and slew famous kings, because his mercy endured for ever. Read the page of history, I say, with this sentiment in your mind, and you will often judge that what seemed to be a very severe retribution upon some man of eminence, may turn out, after all, only to have been an act of mercy towards those who were under his power.

Apply the thought another way. There are huge systems of power in the world, and such there always have been—systems, like Sihon, king of the Amorites, whose force and fame have held vast hordes and populations in terror, and the defences of these systems have been strong as the walled cities of Og, king of Bashan; but since the day when Christ came into the world and gathered his twelve apostles around him, how many of these systems have been utterly destroyed? Ask, at this moment, where are the gods that were worshipped when Paul entered Athens and preached Jesus and the resurrection? Where are all the gods that held sway over Greece and Rome when Peter, and the rest of the fishermen, were telling of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the propitiation that he made for sin? They have passed away, and they are not. And, since then, there have risen up great systems and schools of thought—in which human wisdom has opposed the divine wisdom. Strong and mighty systems they have been, but the student of history knows how they have all passed away one after the other. And in our own land there has passed away—I pray God never to return—the system of Popery, more terrible than Sihon, king of the Amorites, or Og, king of Bashan. And now our ruined abbeyes are scattered all over the land—ruins which make our souls rejoice as we look upon them, for we say, "Come, behold the works of the Lord; what desolation he hath made in the earth." And here is another instance of how he can put his foes to flight. At this day there are other systems still standing, crushing down the people, darkening the night of nature with a denser darkness of superstition—turning a midnight of human depravity into a darkness that might be felt, as in the plague of Egypt of old. But, as the Lord liveth, as he hath scattered falsehoods one after the other, so will he scatter all these systems, and the day shall come when we shall say, "Mahomet's crescent is forgotten now, for his mercy endureth for ever; and the pomp of anti-Christ has passed away and all his infallibility; for the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever." One great error after another is brought down by the strong hand of the God of Jacob, for his mercy endureth for ever; and though in each case these things seem like judgments upon the people, yet are they judgments full of mercy, for it is a blessing when God smites any system which is contrary to himself and to his truth, contrary to his Son, contrary

to the liberties and the rights of man, and, above all, contrary to the gospel life and the holy purity of the church.

Now, brethren, there are other judgments yet to come—judgments which we, surely, are to look forward to with great hope as instances of the mercy of God. The day is coming when he who is more terrible than Sihon, king of the Amorites, shall be cast out. Christ, by his death, has broken the power of Satan, but Satan still holds sway to a great extent over the sons of men. As the gospel spreads his power shall lessen, and by-and-by there shall come the time when he shall be bound—when he shall be cast into the lake of fire, and his power shall cease. It will be a judgment upon him. But what an illustration it will be of how God's mercy endureth for ever. Then shall he lift "his brazen front with thunder scarred," receive his sentence, and begin anew his hell; and in that day the saints shall sing "His mercy endureth for ever." And death, too, that terrible thing, that also is to be destroyed, the last enemy it is, but it is the last enemy *that shall be destroyed*; and when death itself shall cease to be, and the sepulchre shall be rifled of all its treasures, then shall we magnify and bless the Lord, as Israel did when they thought of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan; for his mercy endureth for ever. And when that last tremendous act of vengeance shall come, and death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire; and all the hosts of evil, even all that have done iniquity and have rejected Christ, shall be cast out for ever from all hope and joy—in that dread day, while it shall be to them weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, it shall be to the righteous "Hallelujah! hallelujah! for God and goodness, the right and the Christ, have triumphed for ever." Yea, even in the condemnation of the lost, it shall be a token of mercy to the universe that sin was not permitted to triumph, that evil was not allowed to have its sway, but that God overcame it at a mighty cost, and, at last, shut it up within its proper bounds, never to break forth again, for "his mercy endureth for ever."

We know not, brethren, what may happen to ourselves, but we know what *has* happened, and, in the light of the truth I am now dwelling upon, we may now sing unto the Lord a new song. We have had our smitings, and we have had our slayings. We have had sins within us slain that were mighty kings, and we have had corruptions that were famous kings, but they have been brought down; we have had our idols broken, and judgments have come upon our inventions. Oh, what a smashing of idols there has been with many a heart here present, how have you stood with tears in your eyes as your Dagon was made to fall before the ark of the Lord! You tried to set it in its place again, but you could not, for the Lord broke it to pieces; and he has taken away the gods wherein ye trusted and the things that your heart doted upon, and the delight of your eyes, and the joy of your spirit—he has taken these away one by one—mighty kings that swayed you, and famous kings that ruled your heart and mind, and engaged the best of your affections. These have been slain because his mercy endureth for ever, and, for my part, I would say, "O sword of the Lord, rest not: return not to thy scabbard if thou art slaying my sins, if thou art overcoming my corruptions, go through me, Lord, and smite again, and if thou breakest up the idols, break on."

“The dearest idol I have known,
 Whate’er that idol be,
 Help me to tear it from its throne
 And worship only thee.”

Still would I say of every act of idol-breaking and of king-slaying within my soul, “His mercy endureth for ever, his mercy endureth for ever.” Hence these smitings, hence these trials, hence these afflictions; they are sent, not in anger, but in his dear covenant love—not to harm us, but to bless us; not to impoverish us, but to make our inheritance wider and larger, both here and in the world to come. This is our first thought. In the midst of judgments we should wait and watch till we see the mercy side of them, for then we shall sing, “Who smote great kings, for his mercy endureth for ever: and slew famous kings, for his mercy endureth for ever.”

II. Secondly, EACH MERCY DESERVES TO BE REMEMBERED. With what special point and emphasis each instance is put, “Sihon king of the Amorites, for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth for ever.” Why not give them in the gross—Sihon and Og? Why not, as we commonly and vulgarly say, lump them together, and thank God for them in the mass? No, no, they must come in detail—“Sihon king of the Amorites, for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth for ever.” Why should they thus come in detail?

Because *every mercy we have received is undeserved*. The Israelites did not deserve that God should smite Sihon, king of the Amorites, or Og, king of Bashan. It was a mercy so rich and gracious that it deserved to be recorded. In that very chapter, from which I read to you just now, where God smote Sihon, you will find that the children of Israel murmured, so that God sent fiery serpents among them. In that same chapter we have the record of his chastening them with fiery serpents, and yet he is giving them victory over their foes. Oh, it brings the tears into our eyes, and fills us with humiliation, when we recollect that many of our choicest mercies have come to us just after our very blackest sins. It is not that the Lord gives us his mercy when we are walking consistently—when we are obedient, when we are what we ought to be; there would be great grace in that; but the crowning mercy is that when we have gone out of the way—when we have gone down By-path Meadow, when, like Peter, we have denied our Master, yet still some great mercy has been vouchsafed to set us right again. Sihon, king of the Amorites, just when we had provoked the Lord, has come down upon us to destroy us; but the Lord has said, “No, I will smite my children, but I will not let *you* smite them. I will chasten them and send fiery serpents, but, Sihon, you must not touch them. Get you back. If you dare lay a finger upon them my jealousy shall burn and smoke against you; for they are my children, and I will deliver them in the day of their afflictions.” Oh, bless the Lord for each mercy, because it has been so undeserved.

Nor have we received a mercy *that we could have dispensed with*. Had God smitten Sihon, king of the Amorites, and then when Og came against them had said, “I have done enough for you, and I will do no more; the nation would have been destroyed. No, Sihon, king of the

Amorites, is smitten. Bless the Lord for that. Yet if the Lord does not smite Og, king of Bashan, what will become of Israel? Thus each mercy is needed, why then should not each mercy have a separate song? When you are in present trouble you think much of the present mercy. My dear brother, when you have got through the trouble, why not think a great deal of the mercy afterwards? Then as it comes, a brand new mercy in a fresh dilemma, the more you need it, the more store you set by it. Why not set the like store by these mercies after you have received them, and commemorate in particular the benefits which flow out of each? Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan shall be sung of each one separately, because neither victory could be dispensed with. They were both needful that Israel might enter into the promised land.

Moreover, there was a *peculiarity about each mercy*. This was sure to be the case. You never had two mercies from God that were quite alike. There were some special circumstances which made a marked difference. Pluck the leaves from a tree: commonly speaking, they are alike, yet there are no two leaves veined exactly in the same manner. So too with mercies. There is some distinction, if you look narrowly into them. Generally, when we are in deep waters, there is some peculiar feature to distinguish the trial and to identify it afterwards. I know that Monday's mercy will not do for Tuesday, and I should be sorry if I had nothing but Tuesday's mercy to help me through Wednesday. His mercies "are new every morning: great is his faithfulness." Now, since they are all new, and each one separate, why should not each one be spoken of by itself? As God paints so many fresh pictures, why should we not set them in appropriate frames, saying of each one, "His mercy endureth for ever"? There is a speciality about each. Sihon is not Og, and Og is not Sihon. Well may my text assign to each one its place in the song of praise.

But if any mercy deserves to be rehearsed more distinctly than another, it is early mercy. The children of Israel had not got their hands into fighting yet. They had not crossed the Jordan; they had not entered Canaan, where they were to be soldiers every day; they were on this side the Jordan, and they had not learned war. They offered to Sihon, and to Og, to go quietly through their land, and not so much as pluck a fruit from their trees, or drink a drop of water from their wells. But Sihon and Og were in an ill state of mind, and they would not allow them to go peaceably through. There was a battle—the first of their battles—the commencement of their warfare, and so they always looked back with happy and grateful memories to their first fights and their first victories. No doubt they recollected all about Adonibezek, and about the king of Ai, and all those other kings; but these were afterwards, their first fights were with Sihon and Og. Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, I should like you to recall your first troubles—your first labours for Christ, your first trials, and your first successes. You recollect the first soul that you brought to Jesus—you cannot forget the little room where you began to work. You remember the half-dozen girls that you collected for the first time to form a class—those two or three boys that you got into that little room down in the back-slum. Now, remember your Sihon, king of the

Amorites, and your Og, king of Bashan, and how God helped you over those beginnings. It was a great thing, you know, for you were not so big then as you are now. You begin to think (I am only saying out aloud what your heart whispers to you)—you begin to think that *you* can do it. Why, you are a man of experience, are you not? And you, young man, why, you are a well developed minister now; you can do a great deal. We too often feel as if our experience had matured us into something far more important than we dreamed of in the first stage of our little career. It is a wicked feeling, but the vanity of our hearts will sometimes assert itself. Now, just let us revert to the time when we were little in Israel, and all unknown, some of us were, perhaps, quite boys and girls, though we truly loved our Lord. We were weak and feeble; nobody thought there was anything in us; or, if they did, we ourselves did not think so. We were all trembling, and afraid; but, glory be to God, we overcame Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan, and our early victories are fresh in our memories. Let us recall them, partly to humble us, and partly to strengthen us. Let us, like David, say, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." The Lord who helped those young days will not forsake you now. Only trust him with the same simplicity; only distrust yourself as much as you did then, and a little more; only sink into the very dust of self-abasement, and rise in all the grandeur of childlike confidence in God, and as he smote Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, so will he make all your foes as driven stubble before your face. He will make you as a new, sharp threshing instrument, having teeth, and you shall thresh the mountains and make them as chaff.

Thus each mercy deserves to be specially remembered, for not one is deserved, not one is needless, and every one has its peculiarity, and especially the early ones,—they have a never-to-be-forgotten speciality.

III. Thirdly, EACH MERCY DOES REALLY IN ITSELF DESERVE SEPARATE CONTEMPLATION.

I will show you exactly why I think so. I go to visit a sick person. He has been in trouble. Let me suppose it is yourself who makes the visit, for I dare say you have done the same thing. Very soon after you enter you get an account of the trouble in pretty full details; and then you have all the special circumstances related to you. "You see, my dear sir, I should not have felt the loss of this dear child so much, only it is the second or the third I have lost; and then, you see, sir, she was such a sweet girl;" or, "It was that dear boy upon whom I had set all my hopes." These little points are always mentioned as occasions of special grief or aggravations of a heavy sorrow. "My dear husband is taken away," says the disconsolate widow; and, unwilling to mingle her tears indiscriminately with other weepers in like afflictions, she adds, "Ah, sir, but in my widowhood there are pangs peculiarly bitter. Just after he had been toiling and struggling with the tide against him, and we were beginning to get on more smoothly, he was taken away with a sudden stroke or a slow consumption before there was a proper provision made for these dear children. When they seemed to want a father's care and tenderness, it was then, just then, he was smitten, and

I am left with a heart withered like grass." Then you meet another who has lost money, and you hear of the failure that is likely to come on. And then there are certain reasons about the loss—about the person that was trusted, certain circumstances about the cruel manner in which he acted, and the shameful way in which he betrayed confidence. You hear all that. Oh, I know all about it. I have heard it, and, moreover, when I have got some trouble of my own, I think I generally find myself turning it inside out, like a child does a new dress, saying, "Look here," and showing every bit of it—every point of it—upside down, the right way up, the wrong side up, and the wrong side out, and all ways. You always do that, do you not, with all your troubles? Now then, dear friends, ought you not to do the same with all your mercies? Do you not think so? If the Lord gave you nothing but troubles, then, methinks, there might be some justification in dwelling so much upon them; but since there are so many mercies, would not it be wisdom to tell your friends, sometimes, all about those mercies with a sparkling eye, and say, "They were manifold mercies. There was fold upon fold. See the goodness of the Lord in this thing. He sent that mercy just when I wanted it—just when I most required it, and it came to me in such a beautiful way, too, and it was delivered to me by the very person that made it most acceptable. The way in which the gift was bestowed so sweetened it, that I do not know how to praise the Lord enough for it." Oh, that I heard Christians often saying one to another, "Have you heard what the Lord has done for me? Sit down a little while, and let me fill your ears with the sweet tale of his lovingkindnesses and his tender mercies." Is not this justice? Bare justice? If you will harp on your sorrows, you should, in a better sense, harp on your joys, and bring out the best harp with all its ten strings, and touch all those strings with praise to him who has done so much for you. Tell the world not only that he overcame your foes, but say, "To him which smote great kings, for his mercy endureth for ever: and slew famous kings, for his mercy endureth for ever: Sihon king of the Amorites, for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth for ever." "We might tire people," says one. I am glad you are a little sensitive on that point, because you have been rather inconsiderate sometimes when you have been talking about your troubles, and I think you might be excused if you were to weary us occasionally by declaring your mercies. Oh, but the ears of saints are not tired with such themes as this; on the contrary, they are gladdened and made to rejoice. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul." I am sure the response of all God's people will be—"Let us hear it. Tell it to us, for we will rejoice with you and magnify the name of the Most High."

IV. Fourthly, CONTINUED BENEFITS ARE A SPECIAL PROOF OF ENDURING MERCY.

For God to slay Sihon king of the Amorites may hardly prove by itself that his mercy endureth for ever, though it does prove that he had mercy then. Hence the inspired poet wisely strikes that string, and ere the note has died away upon the listening ear he touches another. "Og king of Bashan," says he; "for his mercy endureth for ever." One, two, three, four, five, six succeeding stanzas—these mercies

come quickly one after the other, and so they show the continuance of the mercy, while the unbroken succession of wave upon wave in ceaseless regularity gives sanction to the chorus, "his mercy endureth for ever." Thus, dear brethren, were we in the habit of dwelling distinctly upon God's distinct mercies, do you not think we should have in our souls a firmer faith as to the endurance, the continuity, the everlastingness of the mercy of God? Oh, what the Lord did for us when we were babes in grace! When we think of what he then did, we say, "His mercy endureth for ever." Then consider what he did for us when we were young men in Christ Jesus. "His mercy endureth for ever." Think of what he has done for us after we have grown to be fathers, "His mercy endureth for ever." And O ye grey heads, tell of what the Lord has done for you, for when you put all four ages together you can say with peculiar emphasis, "His mercy endureth for ever." I wish I had a memory strong enough to recollect all the mercies of God to me in the past year. They have been very many, very great, and taken one by one they have been very sweet. As I look at them one after the other, the evidence seems to accumulate till the argument becomes conclusive that "His mercy endureth for ever." It has endured all through the year, it was connected with all the years that went before, it is gathering fresh force in the year that is current, so I may trust for the years that are yet to come that he who was yesterday so full of mercy, and is to-day so full of grace, will be for ever the same. Do you not see that the striking of these bells one by one—the bringing out of each mercy in its distinctness one after the other—goes to illustrate the precious and ever-blessed truth that his mercy endureth for ever. Let our hearts look forward with the calm confidence which must come to a soul that lives by faith and sings without fear—

"For his mercies shall endure
Ever faithful—ever sure."

V. Fifthly, THE OVERRULING OF TRIALS IS A SUBJECT TO DWELL UPON WITH DELIGHT.

Read the verses—"And gave their land for a heritage, for his mercy endureth for ever: even a heritage unto Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth for ever." The Israelites did not expect to have the territory of Sihon and Og. Their land was on the other side of Jordan, but since Sihon and Og assailed them as unexpected foes, they got out of them unexpected territory. You and I have had, and we do have, unexpected trials. In looking back we have suffered many trials which we did not anticipate from unlikely quarters, from persons who ought to have been our friends, our helpers, our comforters. The result has shown that we have had unexpected advantages: our perils have proved pioneers of our progress. I want you to remember this, that you may sing the more sincerely, "His mercy endureth for ever."

How many sins and how much unsuspected treachery of heart have we been led to discover through our troubles. Those vipers would have slept in our soul quietly: they would have bred disease there of the deadliest kind; but trouble came, and we were put in such a state of trembling that we began to search; and as we searched we found the deadliest evil, and we put it away. How many a vice has been discovered

to us in the hour of trial. Whenever I hear of a brother who thinks his corruptions are dead, I feel inclined to say, "Put him half-an-hour in the furnace, and if he does not hear the dogs bark inside his soul, I am mistaken." There they are, sure enough. Depend upon that. He is possessed of most devils who thinks he has the fewest imperfections, as a general rule. Only let us get into trouble—be thrown into the sieve, and let the devil give us an extra shake or two, and there is enough of chaff or dust in us all to blind our eyes, or to fill them with tears, when our Lord sends us repentance. It must come—this trouble, and we must be thankful for the trouble since it winnows the wheat and makes us clean before the living God.

Besides helping to cleanse us, how many times has trouble helped to instruct us. You may read the book all through, young man, and you may think that you know all about it; but your grandfather knows the meaning of texts that you cannot spell yet. "Oh," you say, "I have been studying the commentators; I have been looking into them for the meaning of the passages." Yes, but there is another way of reading the commentators, and it comes from *experience*; experience is the grand way of getting texts written upon your heart. There are many texts that cannot be brought home to your own heart yet. A text of that sort must be brought home to you when you are in such a position as to need its application, and it cannot be understood until then. You may have learned all about anchors, sir, but you never know the value of a sheet anchor till you have got into a storm. You may read and hear on shore all about a tempest, and you may have met with beautiful descriptions of it, and think you know how it tosses the ship about; but I will warrant you that a good heave or two will let you know more about sea-sickness and the effects of those mighty tempests that rouse the billows and rock the vessels than all the books you have ever read for sound instruction or seasonable entertainment.

And how much has the character of God been revealed to us in trouble. We do not know our friends till we fall into adversity; neither is that "friend who sticketh closer than a brother" truly prized by us till we are brought into trouble, and then we know his power to sympathize and to succour.

Trials help to strengthen us. It is impossible for a Christian to be very strong—in certain ways, at any rate—unless he grapple with difficulties and endure hardships. There is no proving your courage and prowess in war, except you smell gunpowder, and are exposed to the dread artillery. There is no learning to be strong in the battle except you pass through trouble: depend upon it. My arm would soon weary if I had to lift the blacksmith's hammer for an hour or two, and make horseshoes. I am afraid I should soon give up the business. But the blacksmith's arm does not ache, for he has been at it so many years, and he rings out a tune on the anvil, so joyfully does his strong arm do the work. Practice has strengthened him. And so, when we have become inured to trial and trouble, faith is to us a far more simple matter than it was before, and we become "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." What shall we say then? Thanks to Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, for teaching us *war*? Nay; but we will thank the Lord, who has given "their land

to be a heritage, even a heritage for Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth for ever."

VI. Lastly, THE HAPPENING OF ALL THIS TO THE SAME PERSONS IS A FURTHER ILLUSTRATION THAT HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER. These six verses tell of great things done for Israel, all for Israel. That last verse is very sweet to me—"Even an heritage unto Israel his servant." What are the kings slain for? For Israel. What does Sihon die for? For Israel. Why does Og fall? For Israel. For whom is the heritage? For Israel. And who is Israel, and what has Israel done, to have all this? What have they done? Brethren, it is a sad but gracious story. Israel! Israel! Why, that is the nation that made the golden calf, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel." Israel! Why, these are the people who said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou brought us into this wilderness to destroy us." Israel! Why, these are the people that took the daughters of Moab and committed lewdness with them. Israel! Why, these are the people who provoked the Lord, so that he said to his servant Moses, "Let me alone! Let me alone, that I may destroy them," for they provoked the Lord to jealousy. Israel! Why, these are the people of whom God swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. Yet is it the same nation. Their children have followed them; it is Israel still, and God has done all this for Israel. Now, while you are thinking about Israel, just begin to think about yourselves. For whom has God done all this—turned judgment into mercy, fought great battles on their behalf, and given them a great inheritance of mercy and lovingkindness and favour? Who is it for? Well, I will not mention anybody's name, but I will mention my own to myself; and as I mention it I think—

"O grace, it is thy wont
Into unlikeliest hearts to come."

How singular that thou shouldest do all this for such an one as I am. Brother, sister, I can better understand God's mercy to you than I can his mercy to me. I know one who has, in distress, sometimes doubted the lovingkindness of the Lord. I know one who has been proud, envious, and worldly. I know one whose heart has been cold, dead, callous, careless, when it ought to have been tender, and full of pity and full of love. I know one that is all imperfections, all faults. He seems to himself to grow worse instead of better every day: at least he loathes himself more a hundred times than he used to do. And yet I know that the Lord loves that man; but why I do not know, except "even so, Father, for so it seems good in thy sight." And if you tell your own story truly, and know your own hearts and your own lives, you will wonder and be astonished to the extreme of wonderment that the Lord should give a heritage to Israel—to you, his servant—truly his servant, but a poor, faulty servant to have such a heritage given him out of the abundance of the grace of God. And why does he do it, but that his mercy endureth for ever? Is there one of us who might not justly be in hell before the clock ticks again, if it were not that his mercy endureth for ever? The brightest saint here has no brightness but what God lends him, and he only lends it to him because his mercy endureth for ever. Oh, bless his name, ye children of his that live near to him—

you that have climbed to the highest stage of communion. Remember, you do not stand there because of anything in yourselves, but because his mercy endureth for ever. If you have conquered your sins—Sihon king of the Amorites—it is because his mercy endureth for ever; and if to-day you put your foot upon the neck of Og, king of Bashan, it is not because you are strong, but because his mercy endureth for ever. If you have grown in sanctification, and begin to possess the land which God has given to be a heritage to his people, it is still because his mercy endureth for ever; and when death itself is dead, and you have passed beyond the gate of pearl, and taken possession of the throne reserved for you with Christ at God's right hand, the only reason why you shall get there will be because his mercy endureth for ever. This is the song of every saved soul in this tabernacle, as it shall be in the temple above, from henceforth even for evermore.

I think it ought to be a great encouragement to those of you who are not God's people, if there be any such present, and there may be. Oh, how it ought to ring in your ears, "His mercy endureth for ever." You are very old, but his mercy endureth for ever. You are very sick and near to die, but his mercy endureth for ever. You have gone to the utmost extreme of sin, but his mercy endureth for ever. You have resisted his Spirit, you have stifled your conscience, you have been disobedient to Christ, but his mercy endureth for ever. You have indulged every evil passion, you have broken loose from every bond that ought to have held you to the way of right, but his mercy endureth for ever. The last day of your life is almost come, but his mercy still endureth, and will endure till you die. If death comes, we have no gospel for the dead, but as long as you live that mercy still endureth.

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

The returning prodigal trusting in Jesus Christ shall find mercy. If you say, "Oh, but, Lord, my sins are strong, how can I master them?" the answer I shall give you is in the words of my text, "He slew great kings, for his mercy endureth for ever: yea, slew famous kings, for his mercy endureth for ever." Cannot God slay your sins? As for Satan and the world, he slew Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth for ever. If you say that you never can be holy, and never can grow like his children, I know "he gave their land to be a heritage, for his mercy endureth for ever, even a heritage unto Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth for ever," and why should he not even thus enrich you with sanctifying grace? May God of his rich mercy abundantly bless you, that you may sing his praise for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Numbers xxi. 21—35; and Deuteronomy ii. 16-37, iii. 11.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—186, 196.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A WEIGHTY CHARGE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 26TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God."—Jude 21.

JUDE gives a very terrible picture of what will happen in the last days. He describes apostates, and paints them in the blackest colours, and he then informs us that there will come in the last time mockers, and with them separatists and sensualists, all of whom will assail the church of the living God. It was very natural that after foretelling our adversaries and describing them, and so bidding us view the hosts assembled for the war, he should next instruct us how to prepare our defences, and set our forces in battle array. In the twentieth and twenty-first verses of his epistle, Jude mentions the great Christian *Quadrilateral*, the four forts which must be well manned and carefully maintained if we would baffle the advancing foe. I shall call your attention to the four important points, though I must do so with the utmost brevity.

The apostle says, "Ye beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith." *Edification* is a grand defence against the assaults of sceptics and heretics. These prey upon the ignorant and unestablished, but fail to overthrow those who are rooted and grounded in the truth. We need to be continually built up: learning more, loving more, and living more the grand truths of the gospel. We must see to it that the foundation is right, for it will be useless, or worse than useless, to be built up upon false principles—it is "on our most holy faith" that the building must be based. We should be so established in the doctrines of grace as to recognize their holiness and to imitate it in our own lives. Only a "most holy" faith is safe for the soul, and woe unto the man who rests content with any other. See, then, brethren, that to ward off the ills of these last times we must labour to know the truth ourselves, and must endeavour to instruct our brethren therein. Personal and mutual edification in the church should be zealously maintained as one of the most valuable defences against the invasion of error.

The second most needful defensive principle in the church is *devotion*.

No. 1,286.

"Praying in the Holy Ghost" is the weapon with which the hosts of the Lord will put to rout the armies of the alien. The prayers of saints are the mighty artillery with which the walls of our Jerusalem are protected. Supplication is a cannon which throws tremendous bolts against the advancing foe, as Sennacherib knew when Hezekiah pleaded with God. The prayers, however, must be deeply spiritual, written on the heart by the Holy Ghost, and presented with energy of his creating. Formal, lifeless petitions are but a Chinese painted fortress, but praying in the Holy Ghost is an impregnable castle. Those "groanings which cannot be uttered" are pieces of ordnance which make the gates of hell to tremble. We must put our hearts under the influence of the blessed Spirit of God, and then lift them up in continued intercession before God, and there can be no fear about the preservation of our minds from the error of the wicked. A praying church soon tries the spirits of false prophets, and casts them forth as evil. I have far more faith in prayer than in controversy. Keep the prayer meetings right, maintain private prayer with earnestness, and we may laugh to scorn all the sophisms of unbelievers and deceivers.

Jude next mentions as a third important matter the *affections* of the church. If the hearts of the members of the church are right, mockers and scoffers can do very little against them. "Keep yourselves in the love of God"; for a warm-hearted company of Christians who love the Lord with all their hearts, and with all their souls, are not likely to be overcome by mockers and sensualists. Love to God will be as a wall of fire round about them. In dull, decaying churches, errors spread like ivy on the crumbling walls of an old abbey, but life, zeal, earnestness, warmheartedness throw off these evils even as a red-hot iron plate evaporates the drops which fall upon it. Love God, and you will not love false doctrine. Keep the heart of the church right, and her head will not go far wrong; let her abide in the love of Jesus, and she will abide in the truth.

The fourth point to which he calls attention is the brightness of our *expectancy*. "Looking," says he, "for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Expect that Christ will come, and come with blessings undeserved, which shall display the mercy of God to us; expect that when he comes it will be to end our conflicts, to tread Satan under our feet, and to reveal and perfect that eternal life, which he has already implanted in us. Looking forward to the sure coming of Christ, the church will not be afraid of the great swelling words of men, nor dread their murmurings. She will have an answer to the tyrant's question, "Where is the promise of his coming?" She will reply, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." First, "building," and then "looking" from her watchtower, the church will defy the powers of evil, confident of victory at the appearing of her Lord.

Brethren, if the darkest times should come, if these four points are diligently maintained, we shall be perfectly safe against the cunning assaults of the arch enemy. O servants of the living God, seek ye with all your

hearts the edification of the saints, keep warm your devotions, keep pure your affections, and keep bright your expectancy, for so shall ye stand fast till the tempest is overpast. In prospect thereof we may sing with Jude, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

At this time we take the third of the four exhortations as our text :—*"keep yourselves in the love of God."* This may refer, and I have no doubt it does, to mutual oversight. Christians are to labour to keep each other in communion with God, and if they see a brother grow cold in his attachment to the Lord, it is their duty to endeavour, by gentle rebukes, consolations, and admonitions, to restore the heart of the backsliding one to a proper warmth. "Keep yourselves in the love of God," that is to say,—exercise a mutual oversight, and practise watchfulness over each other, lest any of you should by little and little lose your sense of the love of God. Let not the wolf steal here a lamb and there a sheep, and so diminish your numbers as a church, but ask for the Spirit's aid that you may keep yourselves and your brethren near to the great Shepherd, for so shall you be safe. Mutual oversight will not, however, be the theme of this morning's discourse. I must narrow the text down to a personal duty : let each man keep himself in the love of God.

To many minds this exhortation will appear to be somewhat unguarded. I am quite certain that if I were the author of the sentence my very sound brethren would seriously object to it, and would say, "We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and to exhort us to keep ourselves is useless, carnal, and legal." To whom I reply :—dear brethren, I am not the author of the phrase, and therefore if you have any quarrel with it will you be so kind as to remember that your dispute is with the Holy Spirit and not with me. I find it in the inspired volume, and I have no power or wish to blot it out. Moreover, I find in the word of God many other exhortations against which the same objection may be brought, and I do not intend either to twist them to mean something else or to avoid expounding them from fear of being thought unsound. With half an eye one can see that while in Holy Scripture we are taught that we can do nothing without Christ, we are at the same time exhorted to do all sorts of things, and are even bidden to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. If this be inconsistent it is the inconsistency of Scripture, and I bow before it and leave others to cavil if they choose. All power to do good comes from the Holy Spirit, and all will towards good is from the same source, yet are we bidden to perform right things as freely as if we could and would do them of ourselves. Nor are the exhortations of the word of God couched in guarded language, and hedged round with limiting phrases. Holy Scripture seldom guards its own utterances but speaks freely, and whereas men are so fearful lest they should be mistaken that they frequently interject parentheses and explanations, and so spoil the effect of what they are saying, we find the Holy Spirit speaking out what he has to say and leaving it to the instructed minds of believers themselves to remember those other truths which balance the doctrine

in hand. We are too fearful about truth, she needs no armour, her naked beauty is a better protection than a coat of mail. As no one thinks of wrapping the sun in a blanket of a winter's day, so we need not anxiously guard and protect the truth: let it shine forth, and it will be its own interpreter.

Yet look at the connection, and you will see that it lends no sanction to the proud idea that a man can keep himself apart from the grace of God, for the sentence which precedes the text is "praying in the Holy Ghost." Remember to keep yourselves, but do so by praying in the Holy Spirit, and so confessing that you are dependent upon his divine power. The following sentence also lifts my text out of a legal atmosphere by saying, "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life": showing that your eye is to be to Jesus and not to yourself; and to the mercy of God, and by no means to any merit or power of your own. My brethren, we must never be afraid to exhort one another because of the Scriptural doctrine of the work of the Holy Ghost: this should urge us forward, and by no means hold us back. We are not to feel ourselves muzzled and gagged when we preach practical precepts because we believe comforting doctrines; let us speak the whole truth with a gracious liberty, resting quite assured that the Lord can reconcile his own truth in the hearts and experiences of his people, and does not need us to be perpetually agitated with the fear of damaging the truth, as if it were some delicate eggshell china which we might break with a touch, or a cobweb which would be swept away by the movement of our hand. Let us speak the truth with all boldness as we ought to speak, and say as the text does, "keep yourselves in the love of God."

This implies, however, beloved friends, that you are in the love of God. It is not an exhortation directed to every man, for some men are not in the love of God. It is directed to those of you who are in that love to keep yourselves in it.

Let me, then, begin by enquiring, are you in the love of God? Not, are you an object of divine benevolence, for that he exercises towards all his creatures—but do you know his love in Christ Jesus? Have you believed in Jesus Christ unto eternal life, and seen the Father's love beaming in the face of Jesus? If you have believed it you have also enjoyed it, for the love of God has been shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto you, and you have been conscious of a joy superior to anything which this world can create. Well, then, continue to believe in that love so deep, so strong, so true. Abide also in the enjoyment of that love, and pray for more. Do not lose the sense of it by careless living. If you have ever known that love it is quite certain that you love God in return; therefore continue to love the Lord. This is, probably, the particular meaning of the exhortation before us. The love of God in you is made manifest by the love which you have towards God, and the consequent affection which you feel to all his people. Endeavour, then, always to love God, and to love him more and more. Feed the sacred flame of divine affection till it become an all-consuming fire. "Oh, love the Lord all ye his saints." With all your heart, with all your soul, and all your strength, love ye the Lord, and love your neighbour as yourselves. Specially cultivate love unto all the saints, for

this also is the love of God. "Let brotherly love continue." "Walk in love as Christ also hath loved you." Keep yourselves in the love of God; you are in that love, you believe it, you enjoy it, you reflect it, you manifest it to others, then continue both to believe and enjoy it, and persevere in displaying and manifesting it in your love to God and your love to men.

Two things this morning, and only two: the first will be *motives for keeping ourselves in the love of God*; and the second will be *means to assist us in so doing*.

I. First, MOTIVES for "keeping yourselves in the love of God." It is as though a courtier having gained the favour of his sovereign should receive upon his entrance into court this good advice from a friend—"You now sun yourself in your sovereign's favour, so act as to retain your position, that you may never be sent away from his presence, and made to occupy a lower place. He is not capricious, but he is jealous, therefore be careful that so you may dwell in the light of his countenance." Believers are always God's servants, but they are not always smiled upon; let them so live as never to lose that smile. When we go to the sunny south in the winter for our health we are advised by the physician to keep ourselves as much as possible in the sun. We are told to let our rooms look towards the sun rising, and to keep clear of sunless streets and courts. This is the advice of wisdom, for if you lodge in rooms upon which the sun never shines you might as well be at home in our own chilly land; the sun is the great physician, and by basking in his beams we find healing beneath his wings. It is even thus with the love of God, "Keep yourselves in it," sun yourselves in it all day long. The flowers teach us this, for when the sun shines upon them they open themselves and turn their faces towards its light. They love him, and they delight to be kissed by his beams, and therefore they keep themselves as much as they can in his brightness. When trees are planted in a spot where the sun only reaches them in one direction, they put forth their boughs towards the sun's quarter, and seek his beams. Do you the same. You are in God's love, continue in it, grow towards it, keep yourselves in it. Your Father loves you; do not, like the prodigal, go away from that love, or forget it, or slight it, or grieve it: enjoy it, be warmed by it, and be sanctified by it evermore.

What is to be the motive for this? It is clear that *all the motives which led you to desire God's love at first should lead you to keep in it*. If it be to me—a poor broken-hearted sinner—of the utmost importance to find the love which heals my wounds, then, being healed, it is equally important that I should keep in that love lest I should be wounded again. If being my father's prodigal child it was a great thing to get back and once more receive the kiss of love, and hear him acknowledge me as his son, it must be equally good for me to stay at home and never play the prodigal again. The true son abides in the house for ever, and dreads the very idea of going forth from it. You know, beloved, with what earnestness you were formerly pleaded with that you should not rest without the love of God in Christ; now, I have but a few minutes this morning to spend on any one argument, and therefore I shall leave it to you to remember what those arguments were, and to enforce them upon yourselves. That which is worth getting is worth keeping. If

divine love was worth seeking, even if you had been called to lay down your lives in the search, it must be equally worth retaining, cost what it may. I have heard that many who have been shrewd at making money, have not been able to keep a fortune after they have gained it; and I fear there are many Christians, who with much zeal obtain a high degree of enjoyment of the love of God, and become very warm and earnest in the ways of God, but they cannot retain their fervour, and after a while they relapse into lukewarmness. Many get into the sunlight of full assurance, but they soon leave it, and are darkened with doubts and fears, and chilled with insensibility and indifference, and so they do not keep themselves in the love of God as they should do. Let it not be so with you, but hear your Master's words, wherein he says, "Abide in Me." If love within the soul is worth the getting, it is worth the keeping,—continue in it.

Next *that we should continue in God's love is his due.* Brethren, that I should know that God loves me, and should rejoice in it, and then should love him in return, is his due under the law, for this is the substance of his law to Israel, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength"; and that because he had revealed his love to Israel, for the preamble of the commandments runs thus,—*"I am the Lord thy God that brought thee out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage."* He claims their love because of his love to them. Much more is it so under the gospel. That matchless display of divine mercy should exercise upon us a divine influence, it should be permitted to melt, renew, restrain, constrain, and govern us. Receiving its blessings and meditating upon its glories, we ought to be as much affected by it as wax by the flame. Touched with its flames of love, our hearts ought to burn with loving gratitude, as with coals of juniper. See God in the gospel and not love him? It is monstrous! Brothers and sisters, if you have a part and lot in the covenant of grace, the love of God with all subduing power must and will hold you beneath its sway. That God's love should be felt and returned is a duty, but at the same time a privilege unbounded.

Remember that God's nature makes love to be his due. Such a character as his engrosses the love of every intelligent and rightminded creature. Not to love such an one as God is would be impossible to renewed hearts. He reveals himself as Father, Son, and Spirit, and in each divine person displays a sacred form of matchless goodness, so that not to love him is baseness and profanity. God's nature claims it, and our nature also cannot rest without it: I mean, of course, our regenerate nature. Grace has made us the children of God, and true children must love their father. It cannot be that the life of God is in your soul if there be no sense of the divine love and no return of that love to him from whence it came. As the sparks seek the sun, who is the father of flame, so in warm affections and communings the love of God in the soul seeks the God who gave it. You cannot be God's children and yet not love him. Well, then, since law and gospel, since *his* nature and *your* renewed nature, since Father, Son, and Spirit all have claims upon your hearts, oh, if you love the Lord Jesus, "keep yourselves in the love of God."

Remember, too, dear brethren (and this is a strong argument) that *love is the evidence of faith, and the grace by which faith operates.* The

faith which saves the soul is always attended by love. It is written, "Faith worketh by love." "Faith without works is dead," but faith without love is faith without works, therefore faith without love is a dead thing, and cannot possibly save a soul. If thou sayest, "I believe in Jesus Christ," my dear brother, if that be true, thou hast proved it already by loving God : therefore prove it still by loving on, even to the end. May the ever blessed Spirit help thee so to do.

Another argument lies here—*the love of God is the spring of all our graces*. I include in the term "the love of God" both God's love to us and our love to him, for they are very much the same. Let me use one illustration : you have a burning-glass, and hold it up before the sun till you focus the rays upon a piece of dry wood and set it on fire. Now, while you see the wood burning to ashes, will you tell me what it is that burns? Does the heat of the sun burn the wood or does the wood burn? The heat which you feel while the wood is burning, is it due to the sun or to the wood? Of course at first the fire is purely and simply the flame of the sun, but afterwards the wood itself begins to burn ; the sun burns the wood and then the wood itself burns ; even so the love of God comes into our heart, and then our heart loves too, and in both cases "love is of God." No man is a Christian unless he himself loves God, with his own heart, but yet our love to God is nothing more nor less than the reflection of God's love to us : so that it comes to the same thing. The love of God, whether from him to us or from us to him, is one and the same thing practically. This, I say, we must retain in our souls, because it is the source of every virtue : no man can do anything aright if he does not love God. Without love to God, where is zeal for his glory? Where is patient endurance for his sake? Where is cheerful obedience to his will? Without love to God where is true knowledge of God? Can any man know a God whom he does not love? Without love to God can any action be acceptable in his sight? Brethren, if you have more love you will have more of every grace, your love will be the test of the healthiness of your condition. When love burns, the whole of our nature blazes with holy fire, but when love smoulders every grace is like a smoking flax. Love must be maintained as a primary necessity of the divine life if we are indeed to glorify God.

Keep yourself in the love of God, because *though your love is all you can give, it is very little*. Suppose you loved Christ more than any saint that ever lived, more than apostle or martyr, yet I put it to you, what is the highest supposable love compared with the love of Christ to you? If you regard the excellency of the character of God, does he not deserve a vastly more intense admiration and affection than we have as yet been capable of? Our whole heart is all too little, let it not be divided. Daily increasing in love, give him all your affections. Consider that if you do not give him all your love you have given him nothing. If you give your body to be burned, and have not love to God, it profiteth you nothing. Though I should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though I should traverse the whole world to preach the gospel of Christ, though with dauntless courage I should brave the gates of hell, yet if I loved not God what would it all be but a dead sacrifice which could not be accepted upon his altar? Keep yourselves, then, dear friends in the love of God, for it is the least you can do.

Recollect, too, that *we must give the Lord our love, or else that love will go somewhere else.* We are so created that we must love something or other. If the Ever-blessed One does not win our love, the world, the flesh, or the devil will gain it. The worst witch in all the world is the world herself, and she soon casts her spell over the man who grows chill in his love to Jesus. You are hankering after some idol or other, my brethren, if God be not all in all to you. If his love be not very sweet within you, and if it do not cause you to love him intensely, you will fall under the dominion either of some lust or passion or corruption, or else your heart will be cankered and consumed with the rust of care and covetousness and worldliness. Your heart cannot be kept from loving, its only safety lies in keeping it in the love of God.

As a motive for loving God, I would remind you *that here lies happiness.* Without an exception, this is the rule, that he who loves God most is happiest. "But there must be exceptions," says one. "If a man be in prison, if he be on the eve of a cruel death, will love to God fill him with delight?" It has done so many a time. "But if a man roll in riches, if he be blessed with good health, and every comfort of life, surely he can be happy without the love of God in his soul." There is abundant evidence to show that it is not so, for the most favoured children of this world become ere long heart-sick of its joys, and the more honest among them have declared that they could find no satisfaction in all their possessions. It scarcely needs a Solomon to tell us that all the world apart from the love of God is "vanity of vanities." A Christian at his worst is really more to be envied than a worldling at his best. I would sooner have a dram of the love of God than be loaded down with the wealth of nations. When the soul is filled with the love of Christ, it seems lifted beyond ordinary manhood; it burns with holy fire, and as it glows it mounts on wings of flame, and soars towards heaven. Love's feet are like hinds' feet, so that it treads upon the high places of the earth, and leaves care and doubt below it, even as the hind of the mountains leaves the marshes of the plains for those who cannot climb. The love of God breeds an enthusiasm, and a sacred fervour within the soul, which lifts men out of themselves, and bestows on them a sort of celestial other-life, a divine *furor*, by which the soul is up-borne as on eagle's wings, and triumphs in joy unspeakable. This makes men ten times stronger, braver, grander, happier than they were before. I suppose to make us equal to the angels we have but to love God more, and to make us superior to the angels, as we shall be in heaven, there will be nothing more wanted than to fill us with a yet superior love to that which angels feel.

Brethren, this shall be my last argument, get love to God and keep it, because *it will make you like Jesus.* Jesus Christ, your Lord and Master, dwelt in the love of God, and was full of love to God, and consequently of love to men. This made it his meat and his drink to do his Father's will. The secret of the life of Christ lies in the supremacy of love within him. He was indeed embodied love: into his heart no selfishness, ambition, anger, wrath, or any gross or sinister motive had ever entered. The prince of this world found nothing in him, because God had everything in him. Love shone in his eye and spoke from his mouth; the Father's love upheld him, and his own love to the Father

covered him with zeal as with a cloak. Get love, much love, true love, sacrificing love, and you will be like Jesus, and so you will be fit to dwell with him in heaven. Love is the very atmosphere of Paradise, it is the odour of the flowers of the new Eden. Put on thy beautiful garments, O bride of Jesus, the garments of glory and beauty which become thy rank; the garments which the Bridegroom's love has wrought out for thee. Gird on the sandals of love, which are fairer than the lily, and more precious than the gold of Ophir. Robed in the love of Jesus, thou shalt shine as if thou wert clothed with the sun, while thy love to him shall make thee fair as the moon in his sight. Wear love to Jesus as your jewels and your adornments, and, when you put them on, take care you never lay them aside, but wear them evermore, for so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.

These are some of the motives out of a mass, but having no time to mention them all, we must leave to your own instructed minds the easy task of arguing for love.

II. Secondly, **THE MEANS** for carrying out the exhortation of the text shall now be considered. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." I am not going to dwell upon prayer, because that is in the sentence before my text: nor will I at this moment insist upon the necessity for the Holy Spirit's aid in this work, for that truth you all know and believe, and we have frequently dwelt upon it of late. The text does not make that doctrine prominent, and therefore, I forbear to enlarge upon it: not because I undervalue it, but because just now it is not our theme. "Keep yourselves in the love of God"—how are you to do so?

Well, first I should say, brethren, *endeavour to be full of that love at this present moment.* If I were told that a city was about to be besieged, and if I were commanded to keep the people supplied with provisions during the siege, I should lay in a plentiful store at once to provide for the famine. So, if you desire to continue in the love of God, have much of the love of God now, and pray for more of it. Oh, to know the love of God as much as ever it can be known! Be greedy, be hungry, be covetous after it. Store it up, fill your soul full of it as a man would fill his storehouses and granary if he knew that a dearth would be in the land. Notice that just before my text these words occur—"Ye, beloved, building," which means increasing, and growing up. The way to keep yourselves in the love of God is to obtain more and more of it. Love is like a fire, which, if it does not consume more fuel, burns low. You cannot stop where you are; to retain you must annex. Napoleon used to say, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." O Christians, remember that you must advance or backslide; you must build higher and higher, love must become more and more supreme in your souls, or you will decline. If you would remain warm, be warm now. Alas, what a little stock of love some Christians have! You may look into their hearts long before you can spy it out. They are true believers, and therefore there must be some love in their bosoms; but their cruse of oil is almost run out, there is just a little at the bottom, hardly enough to cover the wood of the barrel. We ought not to be in so evil a case, for if we have so little grace in prosperous seasons, what shall we do in times of temptation and trial? If the heart is full to overflowing, there is a likelihood that its stores will

hold out, but scant affection makes us fear that it is a transient emotion, and not the love which is born from above.

If you desire to keep yourself in the love of God, *avoid everything that would damp your love.* Avoid sin especially, for sin is the poison of love to God. Love of sin is the death of love to God. I mean by sin, not merely the grosser forms of vice, but everything which has a tendency to tarnish the virgin purity of your soul. I know some Christians who complain a good deal about their want of love to Jesus, and the smallness of their faith, and so on. When I track them to their haunts, I find that they keep ill company, and frequent amusements and assemblies where love to Christ is sore wounded and almost slain. I put it to their own consciences whether they are ever likely to increase their love to Christ by going where his name is not adored and his cause is not befriended. I heard of one who professed to be a Christian that he claimed to be able to attend the theatre and yet to live very near to God; and I remembered the remark of a minister, who said, "When I see great grace in those who frequent the theatre, I shall at once grow prize roses in my coal cellar." Just so; I shall cultivate not only roses, but palms and citrons in the vault under my house when that is the case. He who says that gay amusements help him to grow in the love of God utters a lie. Conscience condemns the worldly professor; he cannot come home from a place of amusement, where the ungodly congregate, without feeling, "I have been where I had no right to be." I am not now judging the outside world, but I am dealing with the members of our churches, who profess to be separated from the world. If a worldling loves worldly amusement, I do not wonder at it, nor wish to deny him his enjoyments. Just as one feels about the swine, that they ought to have their pig wash, for it suits them, and none of us want to share it, so say we of the unconverted and their frivolities. But the case is otherwise with the children of God. O man of God, run not with the multitude. Wantonness, chambering, lewdness, and unclean mirth are not for you. Nay, "let them not be mentioned among you as becometh saints."

I would have you also *avoid as much as possible the company of those who deaden your spirituality.* I like to drop into the house of the poorest Christian man whose conversation will edify me, but though a man may be richer than I am, and his company may be desirable to me in many ways, if I find on coming out of his house that he has insinuated doubts into my mind, or that his language has tainted the purity of my conscience, I am bound to avoid him. If business calls me into connection with him I must go, or else I must needs go out of the world; but I will not seek as my companion any man who in any measure takes me off from keeping myself in the love of God. Neither should we read books which have an injurious effect upon the mind. I wish some of our younger friends would take good heed to this remark. You have little enough of the love of God in your souls,—you do not want to pour cold water on it by emptying trashy novels upon it. Go not into the chill, cold air of irreligion and vanity. Brethren, put everything aside that would hinder your loving God and knowing that he loves you; and if you have erred, and you find out this morning that you have done

not be angry at my rebuke, nor yet be led to despair of yourself,

for the times of your ignorance God winketh at and forgiveth. Go to your heavenly Father and say, "O Lord, help me to make this the rule of my conduct—that whatever prevents my feeling that thou lovest me, and prevents my loving thee, I may withdraw from at once, and have nothing more to do with it, for thou hast bidden me keep myself in thy love."

If you would love the Lord, *meditate much upon what he is, and what he has done for you*. Your debts to him are overwhelming, try to feel them, and so you will love him because he first loved you. See your daily dependence, your hourly indebtedness, and the patience, constancy, faithfulness, and tenderness with which he cares for you. Here I need not enlarge, for you will not fail to do this if you be indeed the subjects of divine grace.

Next, dear friends, if you want to be kept in the love of God *follow earnestly the means of grace*. Do not neglect the hearing of the word, nor the reading of it in private, nor secret prayer, nor the assembling of yourselves together. Come often to the Lord's table; you will find it a very blessed means of quickening the pulse of your soul. There are God's appointed ordinances for stirring up your love, do not be so proud as to think you can do without them. I fear there are some Christians who are so busy in *doing* good that they do not allow themselves opportunities of *getting* good. Incessantly do I urge Christian people here to be engaged in some work for Christ; and I would urge it again and again, but some of you young people ought not to absent yourselves from public worship, in order to go and teach in ragged schools or elsewhere; you have not yet enough knowledge, nor enough strength to be able to bear the frequent loss of the instructive ordinances; and even those of you who can bear to go upon half rations will be wise not to do so, for a man who works so long every day that he does not sleep enough, or eat enough, will in the long run be less capable of labour than if he had attempted less and had taken more time for the feeding and resting of his body. Do remember that Martha, though she was very busy, was not so much commended as Mary who sat at Jesus' feet. Be busy as Martha, but be devout as Mary: so will you keep your heart in the love of God.

You will do this very much, too, by *communing with the Lord*. Never spend a day without hearing your Master's voice. Do not come down from your chamber to see the face of man till you have seen the face of God. Do not let week after week roll by without intercourse with heaven. There is no trading like it: send the ships of prayer to the Gold Coast of communion with the Lord, and they will come back to you with priceless treasures. Hold high converse with the supreme Invisible, and your soul will be sure to love him; for never man drew near to God without the love of God flowing into his soul.

Then I would say next, if you would love God *be sure to work for him*. If I wanted a man to love me, and I had my choice of two things, either to do something for the man or to let that man do something for me, if my sole object were to secure his love, I know which I would do; I would let him serve me. If you do a kindness for a man he may be ungrateful and forget you, but if you let him do something for you, the more he does for you the more he will stick to you through life.

For this reason, therefore, you will not only love God because of what he has done for you, but you will love him because you have been allowed to do something for him. Read the song of Deborah when she and Barak had chased away the adversaries. You do not read much in Judges about love to God, but at the end of her song you find it appearing: "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." She felt that she loved God because she had bravely led with Barak the host of God, and love to God had been kindled while she was battling for him. Go and teach the ignorant, visit the sick, help the poor, and guide those that are out of the way, and though you thought you did not love Christ you will soon discover that you do. Laziness is a bolster with which to suffocate love, but honest service of Jesus Christ is a platform upon which love shows herself in all her beauty, and there also she gathereth her strength.

O love the Lord, all ye his saints, and if you need yet another means of keeping you in his love, then *live in expectation of seeing him*. Nothing inflames a Christian's love more than feeling how much he owes in the past, and how much he expects in the future. Jesus is coming; you are soon to be with him: perhaps ere another week is over you will behold his face. Surely you feel even now the kindlings of warm desire: a passion for him springs up within your spirit, and you long for the lagging days to fly, that you may be in his arms. Keep yourselves thus in his love. May God help you so to do, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xv.

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DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 2ND, 1876, BY

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"And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."—2 Corinthians xii. 9.

PAUL, when buffeted by the messenger of Satan, addressed his prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ, and not, as he usually did, to the heavenly Father. This is a somewhat remarkable fact, but it is clear from the passage before us. He says, "For this thing I besought *the Lord* thrice," and that the Lord here is the Lord Jesus is pretty clear from the fact that he says in the next verse, "that the power of *Christ* may rest upon me." His prayer was not directed to God absolutely considered, nor does he speak of the power of God, but his prayer was directed to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was the power of the Lord Jesus Christ which he desired to rest upon him. It is an infallible proof of our Lord's divinity, that he may be addressed in prayer; and this is one instance, with several others, which show to us that we may legitimately present our petitions, not only to the ever-blessed Father, but also to his Son Jesus Christ. There seems to me to be a peculiar fitness in a prayer to Jesus when the temptation came from a messenger of Satan, because the Lord Jesus has endured the like temptation himself, and knows how to succour them that are tempted. Moreover, he has come to earth to destroy the works of the devil. In his lifetime he manifested peculiar power over unclean spirits, and was constantly casting them out from those whom they tormented. It was one of his few rejoicing notes, "I saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven." It was by the name of Jesus that devils were expelled after Christ had risen into the glory. "Jesus I know," said the spirits whom the sons of Sceva endeavoured in vain to exorcise. Devils felt the power of Jesus, and therefore it was wise and natural that the apostle Paul should, when buffeted of Satan, turn to Jesus and ask him to bid the evil spirit depart from him.

It is not a little remarkable also that this prayer was not only addressed to Jesus, but was offered in much the same manner as the prayer of our No. 1,287.

Lord in the garden. The apostle prayed three times, even as our Lord did when he too was sorely buffeted by the powers of darkness. The thrice-repeated cry was intensely earnest, for he "*besought*" the Lord thrice. And Paul, singularly enough, met with very much the same answer as his Master, for our Lord was not permitted to put aside the cup (it could not pass away from him except he drink it), but an angel appeared unto him strengthening him, and so in Paul's case the trial was not taken away from him, but he was strengthened by kind, assuring words, and by being led to see that God would be glorified by his enduring the trial. I see, then, the Lord Jesus reflected in his servant Paul as in a mirror; I hear the three-times repeated prayer, I mark the cup standing unremoved, and I see the strength imparted in the midst of weakness.

Our text fell from the lips of Jesus Christ himself, and if anything could make its language more sweet than it is in itself it would be this fact, that he himself delivered the words to his chosen apostle. It is Jesus who says in the words of the text, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness." This truth casts a soft, mellow light upon the words, helps us to interpret them, and enables us to derive all the greater comfort from them. When Jesus speaks, a special charm surrounds each syllable.

The exact tense of the Greek words it is not easy to translate into English. The apostle does not merely tell us that his Lord said these words to him fourteen years ago, but the tense connects the past with the present, as if he felt that the answer was not simply something past, but something which continued with him in its consoling power. The echoes of what his Lord had said were still sounding through his soul. I should not miss the apostle's meaning if I read it, "He has been saying to me, 'My strength is sufficient for thee.'" The words had an abiding effect upon the apostle's mind, not merely for the time reconciling him to the particular trouble which had afflicted him, but cheering him for all the rest of his life, constraining him in all future trials to glory in his infirmities and render praise to God. It is a sweet thing to have a text of Scripture laid home to the heart for present uses, but when God the Holy Spirit so applies a promise that it abides in the heart for the term of one's natural life, then are we favoured indeed. Elijah's meat gave him strength for forty days, but what is that meat which endureth unto life eternal? What bread must that be which feeds me through the whole period of my pilgrimage? Here, then, we have before us food which Jesus himself provides, so nutritive that his Spirit can cause us to remember the feast to our dying day. O Lord, feed us now and give us grace to inwardly digest thy gracious word.

With this preface, which I beg you to remember during the discourse, since it indicates my line of thought, we now come to the text itself—a mass of diamonds, bright and precious. In the text we notice three things—first, *grace all-sufficient*; secondly, *strength perfected*; and, thirdly, *power indwelling*.

I. In the text even the most superficial observer notices a promise of **GRACE ALL-SUFFICIENT**. In the case of our Lord Jesus, the Spirit so rested upon him as to be sufficient for him at all times. Never did the Spirit of God fail to uphold the man Christ Jesus under the most

arduous labours, the most terrible temptations, and the most bitter sufferings; and therefore he completed the work which his Father gave him to do, and in death he was able to exclaim, "It is finished." The Lord here assures his chosen servant that it should be the same with him,—"*My grace,*" saith he, "is sufficient for thee."

To bring out the full meaning of these few words, I will give you four readings of them. The first is a strictly grammatical one, and is the first sense which they bear. Taking the word translated grace to mean favour or love—for that also is included in the word *charis*—how does the passage run? "*My favour is sufficient for thee.*" Do not ask to be rid of your trouble, do not ask to have ease, comfort, or any other form of happiness,—my favour is enough for thee; or, as good Dr. Hodge reads it, "*My love is enough for thee.*" If thou hast little else that thou desirest, yet surely it is enough that thou art my favoured one, a chosen subject of my grace. "*My love is enough for thee.*" What a delicious expression. You do not need an explanation. Repeat the words to yourselves, and even now conceive that the Well-beloved looks down on you, and whispers, "*My love is enough for thee.*" If you have been asking him three times to deliver you from your present affliction, hear him reply, "Why need you ask me any more? My love is enough for you." What say you to that? Do you not answer, "Ay, Lord, indeed it is. If I am poor, if thou wiltest me to be poor, I am content to be severely tried, for thy love is enough for me: if I am sick, so long as thou wilt come and visit me and reveal thy heart to me, I am satisfied, for thy love is enough for me. If I am persecuted, cast out, and forsaken, cheerfully will I bear it, if a sense of thy love sustains me; for thy love is enough for me. Ay, and if I should be left so alone as to have no one to care for me in the whole world, if my father and my mother should forsake me, and every friend should prove a Judas,—thy love is enough for me." Do you catch the meaning, and do you see how Paul must have been comforted by it if he understood it in this primary and most natural sense? "O Paul, it is sufficient for thee that I have made thee to be a chosen vessel to bear my name among the Gentiles; it is enough for thee that I have loved thee from before the foundation of the world, that I redeemed thee with my precious blood, that I called thee when thou wast a blasphemer and injurious, that I changed thy heart and made thee love me, and that I have kept thee to this day, and will keep thee even to the end by mine inimitable love. My love is enough for thee; ask not to be set free from this buffeting; ask not to be delivered from weakness and trial, for these will enable thee the better to enjoy my favour, and that is enough for thee."

We will now read our text another way, keeping to our authorized version, but throwing the stress on the first word—"My grace is sufficient for thee." What grace is this? Note who it is that promises. It is Jesus who speaks; therefore it is mediatorial grace, the grace given to Jesus Christ as the covenant Head of his people which is here intended. Think of it a minute. It is the head speaking to the member, and declaring that its grace is enough for the whole body. The anointing oil has been poured upon the head that it may go down the head and descend to the skirts, and, lo, one poor member of the body is mourning and complaining, for it is fearful of being omitted in the

plenteous anointing, but the head comforts it by saying, "*My* anointing is enough for thee, since it is enough for all my members." It is the head; Christ, in whom all fulness dwells, speaking to one of the members of his mystical body, and saying, "The grace which God has given to me without measure on behalf of all the members of my body is sufficient for thee as well as for the rest of them." Beloved, seize the thought. The Lord has made over to Christ all that the whole company of his people can possibly want; nay, more than that, for "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace, and from that fulness we hope continually to draw for evermore. This is the grace which is sufficient for us. It greatly tends to help faith when you can see the relation that exists between the Redeemer and yourself; for Jesus is your covenant head, and God has been pleased to give himself and all his infinite riches to the Lord Jesus Christ as your federal representative; and as your covenant head the Lord Jesus assures you that the stores laid up in him on your behalf are sufficient for you. Can you limit the mediatorial power of Christ? Do you not know that God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him? Be ye, then, assured that Christ's grace is sufficient for you.

I will read the text again, and this time put the stress in the centre. "*My grace is sufficient for thee.*" It *is* sufficient. Thou art buffeted by this evil spirit, but my grace is sufficient for thy present need. Paul, thou hast been beaten of rods, and stoned and shipwrecked, and in perils often, and in all these my grace has been sufficient; and now I tell thee this present trouble, though it be somewhat different in shape from the rest, is nevertheless such as I am well able to meet. My grace is sufficient for thee in this also. The nearness of an object increases its apparent bulk, and so the affliction under which we are at present labouring seems greater than any we have known before. Past trials appear when we have passed them to have been small things compared with present troubles, and therefore the difficulty is to see the sufficiency of grace for present and pressing afflictions. It is easy to believe in grace for the past and the future, but to rest in it for the immediate necessity is true faith. Believer, it is *now* that grace is sufficient: even at this moment it is enough for thee. Do not say this is a new trouble, or if you do say it remember the grace of God is always new. Do not complain that some strange thing has happened unto you, or if you do, remember blessings are provided in the grace of God to meet your strange difficulties. Tremble not because the thorn in the flesh is so mysterious, for grace is mysterious too, and so mystery shall be met by mystery. At this moment, and at all moments which shall ever occur between now and glory, the grace of God will be sufficient for you. This sufficiency is declared without any limiting words, and therefore I understand the passage to mean that the grace of our Lord Jesus is sufficient to uphold thee, sufficient to strengthen thee, sufficient to comfort thee, sufficient to make thy trouble useful to thee, sufficient to enable thee to triumph over it, sufficient to bring thee out of it, sufficient to bring thee out of ten thousand like it, sufficient to bring thee home to heaven. Whatever would be good for thee, Christ's grace is sufficient to bestow; whatever would harm thee, his grace is sufficient to avert; whatever thou desirest, his grace is sufficient to give

thee if it be good for thee ; whatever thou wouldst avoid, his grace can shield thee from it if so his wisdom shall dictate. O child of God, I wish it were possible to put into words this all-sufficiency, but it is not. Let me retract my speech : I am glad that it cannot be put into words, for if so it would be finite, but since we never can express it, glory be to God it is inexhaustible, and our demands upon it can never be too great. Here let me press upon you the pleasing duty of taking home the promise personally at this moment, for no believer here need be under any fear, since for him also, at this very instant, the grace of the Lord Jesus is sufficient.

In the last reading which I will give, I shall lay the emphasis upon the first and the last words : "*My grace is sufficient for thee.*" I have often read in Scripture of the holy laughter of Abraham, when he fell upon his face and laughed ; but I do not know that I ever experienced that laughter till a few evenings ago, when this text came home to me with such sacred power as literally to cause me to laugh. I had been looking it through, looking at its original meaning, and trying to fathom it, till at last I got hold of it this way : "*My grace,*" says Jesus, "*is sufficient for thee,*" and it looked almost as if it were meant to ridicule my unbelief : for surely the grace of such a one as my Lord Jesus is indeed sufficient for so insignificant a being as I am. It seemed to me as if some tiny fish, being very thirsty, was troubled with fear of drinking the river dry, and Father Thames said to him, "Poor little fish, my stream is sufficient for thee." I should think it is, and inconceivably more. My Lord seems to say to me, "Poor little creature that thou art, remember what grace there is in me, and believe that it is all thine. Surely it is sufficient for thee." I replied, "Ah, my Lord, it is indeed." Put one mouse down in all the granaries of Egypt when they were fullest after seven years of plenty, and imagine that one mouse complaining that it might die of famine. "Cheer up," says Pharaoh, "poor mouse, my granaries are sufficient for thee." Imagine a man standing on a mountain, and saying, "I breathe so many cubic feet of air in a year ; I am afraid that I shall ultimately inhale all the oxygen which surrounds the globe." Surely the earth on which the man would stand might reply, "My atmosphere is sufficient for thee." I should think it ; let him fill his lungs as full as ever he can, he will never breathe all the oxygen, nor will the fish drink up all the river, nor the mouse eat up all the stores in the granaries of Egypt. Does it not make unbelief seem altogether ridiculous, so that you laugh it out of the house, and say, "Never come this way any more, for with a mediatorial fulness to go to, with such a Redeemer to rest in, how dare I for a moment think that my wants cannot be supplied." Our great Lord feeds all the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, and the cattle on the hills, and guides the stars, and upholds all things by the power of his hand, how then can we be straitened for supplies, or be destitute of help ? If our needs were a thousand times larger than they are they would not approach the vastness of his power to provide. The Father hath committed all things into his hand. Doubt him no more. Listen, and let him speak to thee : "*My grace is sufficient for thee.* What if thou hast little grace, yet *I* have much : it is *my* grace thou hast to look to, not thine own, and *my* grace will surely be sufficient for thee." John Bunyan has the

following passage, which exactly expresses what I myself have experienced. He says that he was full of sadness and terror, but suddenly these words broke in upon him with great power, and three times together the words sounded in his ears, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my grace is sufficient for thee; my grace is sufficient for thee." And "Oh! methought," says he, "that every word was a mighty word unto me; as '*My*,' and '*grace*,' and '*sufficient*,' and '*for thee*,' they were then, and sometimes are still, far bigger than others be." He who knows, like the bee, how to suck honey from flowers, may well linger over each one of these words and drink in unutterable content.

"Have we forgot the Almighty name
That form'd the earth and sea;
And can an all-creating arm
Grow weary or decay?"

"Treasures of everlasting might
In our Jehovah dwell;
He gives the conquest to the weak,
And treads their foes to hell.

"Mere mortal power shall fade and die,
And youthful vigour cease;
But we that wait upon the Lord
Shall feel our strength increase."

II. Secondly, in the text we have **STRENGTH PERFECTED**,—"For my strength is made perfect in weakness." Now, running the parallel still between Jesus and Paul, remember, beloved, that it was so with our Lord Jesus Christ. He was strong as to his deity, in him dwells all strength, for he is the mighty God; but how was his strength as Mediator made perfect? The Scripture says, "Perfect through suffering": that is to say, the strength of Christ to save his people would never have been perfected if he had not taken upon himself the weakness of human nature, and if he had not in that feeble nature descended lower and lower in weakness. Had he saved himself he could not have saved us, but his giving up of all that he had, made him rich towards us, and his putting on of weakness made him strong to redeem us. O incarnate God, thou couldst not redeem till thou wast swaddled as a babe in Bethlehem; nay, thou couldst not redeem till thou wast made to bear a cross like a felon; nay, thou couldst not perfect redemption till thou didst hang a ghastly corpse upon a gibbet; nay, it was even essential that thou shouldst be laid in the grave; thy work was not fulfilled till three days and nights thou didst abide in the heart of the earth amongst the dead. The Lord Jesus could say—"My strength is made perfect in weakness." This was to be realized in Paul, and is to be fulfilled in all the saints. Of course the strength of God is always perfect; we do not understand that anything is necessary to make perfect the divine power, but the words fell from the lip of Jesus as our Mediator and representative, and it is his strength which is made perfect in weakness. In us this is true, first because *the power of Jesus can only be perfectly revealed in his people by bearing them up, keeping them, and sustaining them when they are in trouble.* Who was the perfection of the strength of God till he sees how God can

make poor puny creatures strong? Yonder is a timid, sickly woman, who lives a life of agony; almost every breath is a spasm, and every pulse a pang; each member of her body is subject to tortures of which others scarcely dream; but look at her cheerful patience! As much as possible she conceals her pain that she may not distress others; you hear no murmur of complaint, but oftentimes she utters words as cheery as those which fall from persons in robust health; and when she must tell of her afflictions she always speaks of them in such a tone that you feel she has accepted them at the Lord's hands with complete resignation, and is willing to bear them as many years as the Lord may appoint. I do not wonder when strong men say strong things, but I have often marvelled when I have heard such heroic sentences from the weak and trembling. To hear the sorrowing comfort others, when you would think they needed comfort themselves; to mark their cheerfulness, when if you and I suffered half as much we should have sunk to the earth—this is worthy of note. God's strength is perfectly revealed in the trials of the weak. When you see a man of God brought into poverty, and yet in that poverty never repining; when you hear his character assailed by slander, and yet he stands unmoved like a rock amidst the waves; when you see the gracious man persecuted and driven from home and country for Christ's sake, and yet he takes joyfully the spoiling of his goods and banishment and disgrace—then the strength of God is made perfect in the midst of weakness. While the man of God suffers, and is under necessities and distresses and infirmities, then it is that the power of God is seen. It was when tiny creatures made Pharaoh tremble that his magicians said, "This is the finger of God," and evermore God's greatest glory comes from things weak and despised.

This is equally true to the man himself. *God's strength is made perfect to the saint's own apprehension when he is weak.* Brothers, if you have prospered in business all your lives, and have had an easy path of it, I will tell you something: you do not know much about the strength of God. If you have been healthy all your lives and never suffered, if your families have never been visited by bereavements, and if your spirits have never been cast down, you do not know much about the strength of God. You may have read about it in books, and it is well you should; you may have seen it in others, and observation is useful; but a grain of experience is worth a pound of observation, and you can only get knowledge of the power of God by an experimental acquaintance with your own weakness, and you will not be likely to get that except as you are led along the thorny, flinty way which most of God's saints have to travel, which is described by the word "tribulation." Great tribulation brings out the great strength of God. If you never feel inward conflicts and sinking of soul, you do not know much of the upholding power of God; but if you go down, down, into the depths of soul-anguish till the deep-threatens to shut her mouth upon you, and then the Lord rides upon a cherub and does fly, yea, rides upon the wings of the wind and delivers your soul, and catches you away to the third heaven of delight, then you perceive the majesty of divine grace. Oh, there must be the weakness of man, felt, recognised, and mourned over, or else the strength of the Son of God will never be perfected in us. Thus have I given you two meanings of the

text: others see the strength of God in our weakness, and we ourselves discover it when our weakness is most manifest.

I think the term "made perfect" also means *achieves its purpose*. Read it thus: "For my strength fully achieves its design in weakness." Brethren, God has not done for us what he means to do except we have felt our own strengthlessness, as long as a portion of strength remains we are but partially sanctified. When our Lord has accomplished in us what he is aiming at, the result will be to empty us out and to make us discover the utter vanity of self. If the Lord ever takes you like a dish and turns you upside down and wipes you right out, and sets you away on a shelf, you will then feel what he means you to feel: that is to say, you will feel as if you were waiting there for the Lord to take you down and use you, and then, be sure, he will come in due time and use you for his honourable purposes, laying meat upon you for his hungry people and making you an ornament at his banquets of love. If you feel yourself to be a full dish, I will tell you what there is in you: you hold nothing but the slops and filthiness of depraved nature. The Lord will never use you till all that is poured out, and you are wiped quite clean and put away with nothing of yourself remaining in you, wherein you may glory. All the saints who are ready to go to heaven feel themselves to be less than the least; but those professors who are by no means ready for glory are highly self-conscious, and feel that there is a great deal in them which is very commendable. Those who enter heaven carry nothing of self with them, neither will any of us enter there so long as we talk proudly of our attainments. Those who claim to possess "the higher life" have been heard to boast of their purity, but those who enjoy the highest life in glory cry, "Not unto us! Not unto us, be glory." It is a mark of fitness for heaven when self is dead and grace alone reigns. The strength of God is never perfected till our weakness is perfected. When our weakness is consciously and thoroughly felt, then the strength of God ~~has done its work~~ in us.

There is yet another meaning. *The strength of God is most perfected or most glorified by its using our strengthlessness*. Suppose the world had been converted to Christ by twelve emperors; the establishment of Christianity might have been readily accounted for without glorifying God. Imagine that Christianity had been forced upon men with the stern arguments which Mahomet placed in the hands of his first disciples, the glory would have redounded to human courage and not to the love of God. We wonder not that the gods of the heathen were dashed to the ground when the scimitars were so sharp, and were wielded by such ferocious warriors; but when we know that twelve humble fishermen, without arms or armour, without patronage or prestige, without science or sophistry, overthrew colossal systems of error and set up the cross of Christ in their place, we adoringly exclaim, "This is the finger

of God." And so the other day, when the Lord took a consecrated cobbler and sent him out to Hindostan, whatever work was done by William Carey was evidently seen to be of the Lord. If societies would send out distinguished scholars it is thought by some that in all probability heathen intelligence would recognise their abilities and genius, and respect them, and, convinced by reasoning and influenced by talent, they would bow before superior Western culture. Yes, and so they would be converted by a conversion in which the Lord would not be glorified, but proud man would have the praise. In what way would that increase the glory of God? God uses weakness rather than strength, and so his power is revealed. All that you have that is strong, my brother, will be of small service in this matter, for the Lord will not exalt your strength and make you proud of your attainments: your weakness and infirmities, in all probability, the Lord will see fit to use, for he delights to take the base things and the things that are despised, and use them to achieve his purposes, that the excellency of the power may be all his own.

Let me notice last of all on this point, that all history shows that the *great strength of God has always been displayed and perpetuated in human weakness*. Brothers, what made Christ so strong? Was it not that he condescended to be so weak? And how did he win his victory? By his patience, by his suffering: that is to say, by those things wherein his human weakness appeared. Now, look at Christ mystical, namely, the church. How has the church ever been strong? Of course you reply, "By the strength of God!" I know it: but what has brought forth the strength of God so that it has been undeniably manifest, and consequently operative upon mankind? Has it been the strength of the church? No, but the weakness of the church, for when men have seen believers suffer and die it is then that they have beheld the strength of God in his people. The sufferings of the saints have been the victories of the truth. The martyrs led the van; they suffered most, and consequently are the champions of the elect army: the weakness which allowed of their being destitute, afflicted, tormented, has been the battle-axe and the weapons of war with which the Lord has procured conquest for the gospel. When one of the pastors of a church in London was put to death in Smithfield one early morning, while yet the frost was unmelted by the sun, there stood around the stake a number of young people who had been accustomed to listen to his teachings. Strange thing for young believers to be up so very early to see their pastor burned to death! What do you think they were there for? No idle curiosity could have brought them to such a spectacle. It is written that they went there *to learn the way*. Do you see? They saw him burn, and came there with that intention, to learn the way to die for Christ themselves. The church of Rome

could do nothing with a people who from the weakness which compelled them to suffer gathered strength to die triumphantly. The weakness of the martyr as he suffered revealed the strength of God in him, which held him fast to his principles while he was gradually consumed by the cruel flames. Had not men been poor worms, capable of being crushed, and capable of agonising sufferings, the upholding grace of God could never have been so conspicuously revealed. Blessed be the name of the Almighty, he displays his might in our weakness even as he shone forth in the midst of the burning bush. He spake, and lo! the heavens and the earth stood forth. A marvellous creation! But then there was nothing to oppose the fiat of his power: his all-powerful word was not hampered by using weak instrumentalities. How, then, is God to show yet greater power? How shall *omnipotence* or all kinds of power be seen? Why, brethren, he will not use his unfettered word alone, but he will clog and encumber it by using instruments infirm and weak. He will in the kingdom of grace work by men compassed with infirmities, and achieve his purposes by agencies in themselves unfitted for his ends, and then his power will be doubly seen. The celebrated Quentin Matsys had to make a well-cover in iron one morning. He was a master in the art of fashioning the metal, and could shape it as though it were so much wax. His fellow-workmen were jealous, and therefore they took from him the proper tools, and yet with his hammer he produced a matchless work of art. So the Lord with instruments which lend him no aid, but rather hinder him, doeth greater works of grace to his own glory and honour. He takes us poor nothings who are weak as water, and uses us to accomplish his designs, and this is his almightiness gloriously displayed. Omnipotence when it does what it wills by its bare word is one, but when it takes weakness into league with it and performs its powerful deeds by means of weakness, it counts for two, and by the weakness it doubly manifests itself.

III. The most blessed part of the text remains,—POWER INDWELLING. Dr. Adam Clarke here furnishes us on the last part of our text with a most useful observation, "Most gladly therefore will I glory in infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Now mark, the Greek word here used, interpreted "rest," is the same word employed by John, when he says, "The word was made flesh, and," as the Greek runs, "tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The passage before us means just this, "I glory in infirmities that the power of Christ may tabernacle in me." Just as the Shekinah light dwelt in the tent in the wilderness beneath the rough badger skins, so I glory to be a poor frail tent and tabernacle, that the Shekinah of Jesus Christ may dwell in my soul. Do you catch the thought? Is it not full of beauty? See, then, what he means,—First, he puts the power of Christ in opposition

to his own power, because if he is not weak, then he has strength of his own; if then what he does is done by his own strength, there is no room for Christ's strength; that is clear, but if his own power be gone there is space for the power of Christ. If my life be sustained by my own strength, and my good works are done in my own strength, then there is no room for Christ's strength; but the apostle found that it was not so, and therefore he said, "I glory in my strengthlessness, that the power of Christ may tabernacle in me."

But what is the power of Christ? Let the text I quoted tell you—"The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." What power, then, was this which Paul expected to tabernacle in him but the power of grace and the power of truth? It must be so, because God had said, "*My grace is sufficient for thee.*" Paul catches at that promise, and he cries "this is truth, and I rely upon it"; and he therefore expects that the grace of God and the faithfulness of God would tabernacle in him, and shine forth within his soul. This is the power of Christ which he expected to rest upon him. What more could we desire?

What is the power of Christ? I answer next, it is Christly power: the kind of power which is conspicuous in the life of Jesus. There was a power in Christ peculiar to himself, as all can see who read the New Testament: a power unique and altogether his own. You know what the power of Alexander was: it was a power to command men, inspire them with courage for great enterprises, and keep them in good heart when called to endure hardships. You know what the power of Demosthenes was: it was the power of eloquence, the power to stir the patriotic Greeks, to break the fetters of the Macedonian. But what was the power of Jesus? It was power to suffer, power to be made nothing of, power to descend to the very depths for love of God and love of men. There lay his power, in those five conquering wounds, in that majestic mournful face, more marred than that of any man, in that great agonising heart which sent forth sweat of blood when men were to be pleaded for before the Lord. Love and patience were Christ's power, and even now these subdue the hearts of men, and make Jesus the sufferer to be Jesus the King. Therefore Paul says, "I glory in my infirmities that this same power may tabernacle in me. I triumph in weakness, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake, that I may suffer, and humble myself, and be obedient, and prove my love to God even as Jesus did. When I am weak then am I strong"—strong to prove my love by enduring the weaknesses and afflictions which I accept for my Master's sake.

What was this power of Christ? I answer again, it was a part of the "all power" which our Lord declared was given unto him in heaven and in earth; "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." Paul desired to

have that power tabernacling in himself, for he knew right well that if he had to "go and teach all nations" he would have to suffer in so doing, and so he takes the suffering cheerfully, that he might have the power. Even as beneath the badger skins of the tabernacle the glory of the Lord shone forth, so the mighty converting power of Christ which dwelt in Paul was gloriously revealed while he endured reproaches and persecutions, sufferings and death for Jesus' sake.

What was Christ's power again? I answer, to complete my sermon, his power lay in his weakness, his humiliation, his dependence upon God, his faith in God, his self-abnegation, his perfect consecration to the Father; and Paul says that he was made to suffer, and to be weak, that this same power to become nothing that God might be glorified, might rest in him.

I have done when I say just this. Dear brothers and sisters, go home and never ask the Lord to make you strong in yourselves, never ask him to make you anybody or anything, but be content to be nothing and nobody. Next ask that his power may have room in you, and that all those who come near you may see what God can do by nothings and nobodies. Live with this desire, to glorify God. Sometimes when God honours us in his service a great "I" stands in the Lord's way. Tremble when you see a poor, weak preacher made useful in converting souls: then all the papers and magazines begin to blaze his name abroad, and silly Christians—for there are plenty of them—begin to talk him up as if he were a demigod, and say such great things about him, and describe him as wise, and eloquent, and great. Thus they do all they can to ruin the good brother. If the man is sensible he will say, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God"; and, if God gives him great grace, he will retire more and more into the background, and lie lower and lower before his God: but, if you once get a man to feel himself to be great and good, either a fall will happen, or else the power of God will withdraw from him, or in some other way the Lord will make his people feel that his glory he will not give to another. The best of men are flesh and blood, and they have no power except as God lends them power, and he will make them know and feel this. Therefore, neither exalt others nor exalt yourselves, but beseech the Lord to make and keep you weakness itself, that in you his power may be displayed. God grant it may be so, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

2 Corinthians xi. 5—24; xii. 1—9.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 681, 745.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TRULY EATING THE FLESH OF JESUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 9TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."—John vi. 53—6.

OUR Lord Jesus did not in this passage allude to the Lord's supper, as some desiring to maintain their sacramental superstitions have dared to affirm. I will not dwell upon the argument that there was no Lord's supper at the time to allude to, though there is certainly some force in it; but I will rather remind you that with such an interpretation this passage would not be true. It must be confessed even by the most ardent advocate of the sacramental meaning that the expressions used by our Lord are not universally and without exception true if used in that sense: for it is not true that those who have never eaten the Lord's supper have no life in them, since it is confessed on all hands that hundreds and thousands of children dying in childhood, are undoubtedly saved, and yet they have never eaten the flesh of Christ nor drank his blood, if the Lord's supper be here meant. There have been also many others in bygone times who, by their conduct, proved that the life of God was in their souls, and yet they were not able to eat bread at the sacramental table, from sickness, banishment, imprisonment, and other causes. Surely also there are some others, though I would not excuse them, who have neglected to come to that blessed commemorative ordinance, and yet nevertheless for all that they are truly children of God. Would the highest of high churchmen send every Quaker, however holy and devout, down to the bottomless pit? If this should refer to the Lord's supper, then it is certain that the dying thief could not have entered heaven, for he never sat down at the communion table, but was converted on the cross, and without either baptism or the Lord's supper, went straight away with his Master into Paradise. It can never be

proved ; indeed, it is utterly false that no one has eternal life if he has not received the bread and wine of the communion table ; and on the other hand, it is certainly equally untrue that whosoever eats Christ's flesh has eternal life, if by that is meant every one who partakes of the Eucharist, for there are unworthy receivers, not here and there, but to be found by hundreds. Alas, there are apostates who leave the Lord's table for the table of devils, who profane the holy name they once professed to love : there are also many who have received the sacramental bread and wine, and yet live in sin, who increase their sin by daring to come to the table, and who, alas, we fear, will die in their sins as many others have done. Unregenerate persons are very apt to make much of the sacrament and nothing of Christ. They think a great deal of the bread and wine of the (so-called) altar, but they have never known what it is to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ : these eat and drink unworthily—carnally eating bread, but not spiritually eating the Redeemer's flesh : to them the ordinance is a curse rather than a blessing. Our Lord did not refer to the feast of his supper, for the language will not bear such an interpretation.

It is evident that the Jews misunderstood the Saviour, and thought that he referred to the literal eating of his flesh. It is no wonder that they strove among themselves over such a saying, for, understood literally, it is horrible and revolting to the last degree : far greater is the wonder that there are millions of people who accept so monstrous an error as actual truth, and believe in literally feeding upon the body of the Lord Jesus. This is probably the highest point of profane absurdity to which superstition has yet reached,—to believe that such an act of cannibalism as could be implied in the literal eating of the flesh of Christ could convey grace to the person guilty of such a horror. While we wonder that the Jews so misunderstood the Saviour, we wonder a thousand times more that there should remain upon the face of the earth men in their senses not yet committed to a lunatic asylum who endeavour to defend such a dreadful error from Holy Scripture, and instead of being staggered, as the Jews were, by so fearful a statement, actually consider it to be a vital doctrine of their faith—that they are literally to eat the flesh of Christ, and to drink his blood. Brethren, if it were possible that our Lord required us to believe such a dogma, it would certainly need the most stupendous effort of credulity on the part of a reasonable man, and the laying aside of all the decencies of nature ; in fact, it would appear to be necessary before you could be a Christian that you should altogether divest yourself of your reason and your humanity. It were a gospel certainly more fitted for savages and madmen than for persons in the possession of their senses, and in the least degree removed from absolute barbarism. I greatly question whether the creed of the king of Dahomey contains a more unnatural doctrine. We are not required, however, to believe anything so impossible, so degrading, so blasphemous, so horrifying to all the decencies of life. No man ever did eat the flesh of Christ or drink his blood in a literal and corporeal sense ; a deed so beastlike, nay, so devilish, never was yet perpetrated, or could be. No, brethren, the Jews were under an error ; they made the mistake of taking literally what Christ meant spiritually. Judicially blinded, as the result of unbelief, they

stumbled at noonday as in the night, and refused to see where all was plainly set forth. The veil was on their hearts. Ah, how prone is man to pervert the words of the Lord! I believe that if Christ had meant this word literally, they would have spirited it away; but such is the perversity of the human mind, that when he intended it spiritually then straightway they interpreted it in a grossly carnal manner. Let us not fall into their error, but may divine grace lead us to see that our Lord's words are spirit and life. Let us not be held in bondage by the letter which killeth, but follow the spirit which quickeneth. The spiritual meaning is clear enough to spiritual men, for to them belong spiritual discernment; but as for the unregenerate, these things are spoken unto them in parables, that seeing they might not see, and perceiving they might not understand.

Our first head will be, *what is meant then by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ?* and our second point of enquiry shall be, *what are the virtues of this act?*

I. First, then, WHAT IS MEANT BY EATING THE FLESH AND DRINKING THE BLOOD OF CHRIST? It is a very beautiful and simple metaphor, when understood to refer spiritually to the person of our Lord. The act of eating and drinking is transferred from the body to the soul, and the soul is represented as feeding—feeding upon Jesus as the bread of life. Eating is the taking into yourself of something which exists externally, which you receive into yourself, and which becomes a part of yourself and helps to build you up, and sustains you. That something supplies a great need of your nature, and when you receive it, it nourishes your life. That is the essence of the metaphor, and it well describes the act and the result of faith.

To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, first, *we must believe in the reality of Christ*,—we must not regard him as a myth, an imaginary personage, an invention of genius, or a conception of the Oriental mind, but we must believe that such a person actually and in very deed lived, and still lives. We must believe that he was God, and yet condescended to be incarnate on earth, and here lived, died, was buried, and rose again. “Except a man eat my *flesh* and drink my *blood*.” It is a mode of expressing the actual existence and true materialism of our Lord's body, and the sureness and truthfulness of his existence in human nature. You cannot be saved unless you believe in an historical Christ, a real personage.

“A man there was, a real man,
Who once on Calvary died,
And streams of blood and water ran
Down from his wounded side.”

That same actual person has in his own proper personality ascended to the skies, he is now sitting at the right hand of the Father, and is ordained to descend ere long to be the judge of quick and dead. We should not use the terms flesh and blood unless we meant to indicate an actual person: such language could not describe the creation of a dream, a phantom, or a symbol. Before all things, if you would be saved, you must believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God as having been really manifested in human nature among the sons of men. “The word was made flesh and tabernacled among us,” and the apostles declare that they

"beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

We must believe not only in the reality of the Saviour, but in *the reality of his incarnation*, acknowledging that while he was divine he was human also, that he did not assume human nature in outward appearance, as certain heretics have said, but that Jesus came in the flesh, and as such was heard and seen, and touched and handled. He was in an actual body really nailed to a tree, was really laid in the grave, and Thomas did in real deed put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side. We must also believe that he did assuredly and in very deed rise again from the dead, and that in his own real body he ascended into heaven. There must be no doubts about these foundation facts: if we would feed upon Christ he must be real to us, for a man does not eat and drink shadows and fancies.

We must also truly believe in *the death* of the incarnate Son of God. The mention of his flesh as eaten, apart from his blood which is drunk, indicates death; for the blood is in the flesh while there is life. His death is more than hinted at in the 51st verse, where our Lord says, "and the bread that I will give him is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Brethren, we must believe in our Lord's death, as it accomplishes the expiation of sin, for so faith feeds on his body as given for the life of the world. There are some who profess to believe in Christ's life, and they hold him forth as a great example who will save us from selfishness and other evils if we follow him. Such is not the teaching of the text; the blessing of eternal life is not promised to following Christ's example, but to eating and drinking his flesh and blood, or, in other words, taking Christ into oneself: and the promise is not made to receiving his example or his doctrine, but his person, his flesh, his blood,—his flesh and blood as separated, and therefore himself as dead for us and made a sacrifice for us. Just as in the peace-offerings the offerer sat down and feasted with the priest upon the victim which he had presented, so Jesus Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us, and we are to feed upon him as the Lamb of God, receiving him in his sacrificial and propitiatory character into our souls. It is vain for us to hope for salvation apart from this. The Father sets him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, and if we refuse him in this character Christ has become of none effect unto us. Christ the exemplar cannot save you if you reject him as the Christ who bowed his head to death, even the death of the cross, suffering in his people's stead. Christ as a king cannot save you unless you believe in Christ as a victim. This is absolutely necessary to saving faith: except ye eat his flesh and drink his blood, that is, accept him in his real personality, offered as a sacrifice for sin, ye have no life in you. This is what is to be *believed*.

But in order to eat, a man not only believes that there is bread before him and accepts that bread as being proper food for his body, but the next thing he does is to *appropriate* it. This is a great part of the act of feeding upon Christ. As a man in eating takes the morsels to himself and says, "This is bread which I believe nourishes the body, and it shall now nourish *me*, I take it to be *my* bread," so must we do with it. Dear brothers and sisters, we must say, "Jesus Christ is set

forth as a propitiation for sin, I accept him as the propitiation for my sin. God gives him to be the foundation upon which sinners' hopes are to be built ; I take him to be the foundation of my hopes. He has opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness ; I come to him and desire to wash away my sin and my uncleanness in the fountain of his blood." You cannot eat, you know, unless you make the food your own ; in fact, nothing is more specially a man's own than what he has eaten ; his possession of it cannot be denied, nor can it be taken away from him. So you must take Christ to be as much your own as the bread you eat or the water you drink,—he must beyond question be yours personally and inwardly. Looking up to him upon the cross you have to say, "Saviour of sinners, those who trust in thee are redeemed. I also trust thee as my Saviour, and I am therefore assuredly redeemed by thy most precious blood." Eating lies in part in appropriating food, and so except ye appropriate the flesh and blood of Christ to be your own personal hope and confidence, ye cannot be saved. I have laid stress upon a *personal* appropriation, for each man eats for himself, not for any one else. You cannot eat for anybody but yourself ; and so in taking Christ you take him for yourself ; faith is your own act and deed ; nobody can believe for you, nor can you savingly believe for another. I say it with reverence, the Holy Ghost himself cannot believe for us, although he can and does lead us to believe : and indeed, if the divine Spirit did believe for us, we should not obtain the promise, since it is not made to proxy faith, but solely and alone to personal believing. We are not passive in believing, we must be active, and perform the personal act of appropriating the Lord Jesus to be our soul's meat and drink. This believing in Jesus and appropriating him go far to explain what is meant by eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

Eating and drinking also consist principally in *receiving*. What a man eats and drinks he appropriates to himself, and that not by laying it on one side in a treasury or casket, but by receiving it into himself. You appropriate money and you put it in your pocket—you may lose it ; you secure a piece of land, and you put your hedge about it, but that hedge may be broken down ; but when you receive by eating and drinking you have placed the good things where you will never be robbed of them, you have received them in the truest and surest sense, for you have real possession and enjoyment in your own person. Now, to say "Christ is mine" is a blessed thing ; but really to take Christ into you by the act of faith, is at once the vitality and the pleasure of faith. In eating and drinking, a man is not a producer, but a consumer ; he is not a doer or a giver forth ; he simply takes in. If a queen should eat, if an *empress* should eat, she would become as completely a receiver as the pauper in the workhouse. Eating is an act of reception in every case. So it is with faith : you have not to do, to be, or to feel, but only to receive ; the saving point is not a something which comes forth of you, but the reception of a something imparted to you. Faith is an act which the poorest sinner, the vilest sinner, the weakest sinner, the most condemned sinner may perform, because it is not an act requiring power on his part, nor the going forth of anything from him, but simply the receiving into himself. An empty vessel can receive, and receive all the better because it is empty. Oh soul, are you willing to

receive Jesus Christ as the free gift of divine mercy? Do you this day say, "I have so received him"? Well then, you have eaten his flesh and drunk his blood. If you have received the incarnate God as suffering in your room and place and stead, so that you now trust in him and in him alone, then have you eaten his flesh and drunk his blood.

The process of eating involves another matter, which I can hardly call part of it, but yet it is indissolubly connected with it, namely, that of *assimilation*. What is received in eating descends into the inward parts, and is there digested and taken up into the body: even so faith takes up and absorbs into the man the heavenly bread, Christ crucified. "The word preached," we read in one place, "did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Now, in the original, there is the idea of food taken into the body, but never getting mixed with the gastric juices, and consequently remaining undigested, unassimilated, unprofitable, and even injurious. Faith is to the soul what the gastric juice is to the body; as soon as Christ is received into the man, faith begins to act upon him, to extract nutriment from his person, work, and offices; and so Christ becomes taken up into the understanding and the heart, builds up the entire system of manhood, and becomes part and parcel of the renewed man. Just as bread when it is eaten becomes dissolved and absorbed and afterwards is turned into blood, and flows through all the veins and goes to make up the body, even so is Christ the soul; he becomes our life, and enters mysteriously into vital union with us. As the piece of bread which we ate yesterday could not now be taken away from us, because it is a part of ourself, even so does Jesus become one with us. You ate the bread yesterday, and whereabouts it is now no philosopher can tell; part of it may have gone to form brain, and other portions to make bone, sinew and muscle, but its substance is taken up into your substance, so that the bread dwells in you now and you in it, since it makes up your bodily house. This is to feed upon Jesus Christ, so to take him in that your life is hid with him, till you grow to be like him, till your very life is Christ, and the great fact that Jesus lived and died becomes the mightiest truth under heaven, to your mind, swaying your whole soul, subduing it to itself, and then elevating it to the highest degree. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Even as flowers drink in the sunlight till they are tinted with rainbow hues, so do we receive the Lord Jesus till we become comely with his comeliness, and he lives again in us. This it is to eat his flesh and drink his blood.

But now I will make a series of remarks somewhat out of order with the view of setting forth this mysterious eating and drinking in a clearer manner.

Observe that *Christ is as needful to the soul as bread is to the body*. Meat and drink are absolutely requisite: and so you must have Christ or you cannot live in the true sense of that word. Take away food from the body it must die: deny Christ to a man, and he is dead while he liveth. There is in us a natural desire after meat and drink, an appetite which springs out of our necessity, and reminds us of it: labour to feel

just such an appetite after Christ. Your wisdom lies in your knowing that you must have Jesus to be your own Saviour, and in owning that you will perish if you do not receive him, and it is well with you when this knowledge makes you crave, and pine, and pant for him. If hunger after him, thirst after him; blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after him, for he will fill them.

Meat and drink do really satisfy. When a man gets bread and water, having eaten enough, he has what his nature requires. The need is real, and so is the supply. When you get Christ your heart will obtain exactly what it wants. You do not yourself fully know what the needs of your soul are, but rest assured that, known or unknown, your necessities will all be supplied in the person of Jesus Christ; and if you accept him, as surely as meat and drink stay hunger and thirst so surely will he satisfy the cravings of your soul. Dream no longer of any satisfaction apart from him, and ask for nothing beyond or beside him. Christ is all, and more than all; he is meat and drink too. Be content with him, and with nothing short of him; hunger after him more and more, but never leave him to spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not.

Beloved, a hungry man never gets rid of his hunger by talking about feeding, but by actually eating. Therefore do not so much talk about Christ as actually receive him. Look not on the viands and say, "Yes, these will satisfy me: oh, that I had them"; but eat at once. The Lord beckons you to the banquet, not to look on, but to sit down and feast. Sit down at once. Ask not for a second invitation, but sit down and feed on what is freely presented to you in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. You need him to be formed *in you*, the hope of glory; but this can never be unless you receive him into your inmost soul.

In healthy eating there is a relish. No healthy person needs to be flogged to make him eat, for the palate is conscious of pleasure while we are feeding: and, truly, in feeding upon Jesus there is a delicious sweetness pervading the whole soul. Right royal are his dainties. No "cates ambrosial" or "nectared bowls" can more delight immortal banqueters than Jesus delights believers. He satiates the soul. A thousand heavens are tasted in the Saviour's body and blood. If ever you lose your relish for Christ, rest assured that you are out of health. There can be no surer sign of a sad state of heart than not to delight in the Lord Jesus Christ; but when he is very sweet to your taste, when even a word about him, like a drop from the honeycomb, falls sweetly upon your tongue, then there is not much the matter with you, your heart is sound at the core. Even though you should feel faint it is a faintness of nature, and not a failure of grace; and if you feel sick, if it be sickness after him whom your soul loveth, it is a disease which it were well to die of.

Eating times as to our bodies come several times a day: so take care that you partake of the flesh and blood of Jesus often and often. Do not be satisfied with yesterday's receivings of Jesus, but receive him again to-day. Do not live upon old fellowships and experiences, but go to Jesus hourly, and be not content till he fill you again and again with his love. I wish that we could become spiritually like certain animals that I know of, which stand in the stall and eat all day long

and half through the night too. Here I would fain possess the appetite of the horse-leech, and never feel that I must pause. Happy is that Christian who can eat abundantly of heavenly meat, as the spouse bids him, and never cease eating while Christ is near, but feed on and on till far into the night, and then awake with the dawning to feed on the bread of heaven.

It is well to have set times for eating. People are not likely to flourish who pick up their food just as they can, and have no regular meals. It is well to have settled times when you can sit down to the table and take your food properly. Assuredly, it is wise to have appointed periods for communing with Christ, for meditating upon him, for considering his work, and for receiving his grace. You know with children it is "little and often," and so with us, let it be line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. A bit between regular meals often comes very sweet to a labouring man, and so, though you have special seasons for getting alone with Christ, do not deny yourself a snatch by the way; get a wafer made with honey between whiles, and lay it on your tongue to sweeten your mouth:—a choice thought, a scripture text, or a precious promise about Jesus.

I am sure there is one thing I can say about this feeding upon Christ that *never was a man guilty of gluttony or of surfeit in feeding upon Christ's flesh and blood.* The more you eat of Christ the more you will be able to eat of him. We readily weary of any other food, but never of this heavenly bread. We are often in an ill condition in reference to our Lord because we have not had enough of him, but we can never have too much. When we receive him to the full, we still find that he enlarges our capacity, and we all the more able to enjoy his preciousness.

Observe that the text tells us that the believer is to *eat his flesh and drink his blood*, for observe that Christ is meat and drink too, he is all in all, and all in one. A man must not only eat Christ, but he must drink Christ: that is to say, he must not receive Christ one way only but all ways, and not a part of Christ but all of Christ; not merely Christ's flesh as incarnate, but Christ's blood as the slaughtered sacrifice and bleeding Lamb. You must have a whole Christ, and not a divided Christ. You have not truly received Christ if you have only said I select this and that virtue in him; you must open the door and let a full Christ come in to take possession of your soul. You must receive not merely his work, offices, graces, but *himself*, his whole self. Those receive no grace at all who reject the blood of Christ, for that has special mention. Oh, what hard things I have heard said, even of late, about those that preach the blood of Christ. Let them say on if they will, it is at their peril; but as for me, my brethren, I hope I shall deserve their censures more and more, and preach the blood of Christ yet more abundantly, for there is nothing that can give satisfaction to the soul and quench that fierce, strong thirst which is aroused within our nature, but the blood of Jesus as of a Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.

Beloved, there is one sweet thought that *the flesh and blood of Christ are food suitable for all conditions.* This suits babes in grace, and is equally suitable for old men. This suits sick Christians, they cannot have a daintier morsel, and this suits Christians in the full vigour of their strength. This is meat for morning and meat for night, and meat for

midday ; this is meat to live by and meat to die by,—ay, he that eateth it shall never see death. This is meat for feast days, and this is meat for days when we mourn and sorrow ; meat for the wilderness, and meat for the royal gardens,—meat, I was about to say, for heaven itself, for what better food shall our souls find even there than his flesh and blood ?

And remember all the Lord's people are free to eat it,—ay, and every soul that hungers for it is welcome. No one needs to ask whether he may have it. It is set forth to be food for all believing souls, whatever their previous character may have been. Come and welcome, come and welcome, hungering, thirsting souls, come eat his flesh and drink his blood.

Thus have I tried to set forth in broken accents what it is to eat his flesh and drink his blood. It is to take a whole Christ into you by trusting yourself entirely to him as a man trusts his life to the bread he eats, and the water he drinks. How do you know the bread will feed you ? How do you know the water will sustain you ? Well, you know by experience, you have tried it, you have found that bread is good for you. Why do you not take plaster of Paris ? Why do you not drink vitriol ? Oh no, you know better, you know you can trust to bread to build you up, and to water to refresh you, and even so you do not take in priestcraft and false doctrines, but the blessed person and work of Jesus Christ in his life and in his sacrificial death, you take these in, for you feel that you can feed upon them ; these are the dainty viands that your soul loves.

II. Now let us briefly consider WHAT ARE THE VIRTUES OF THIS EATING AND DRINKING OF CHRIST ? Turn now to your Bibles, and in the 53rd verse you find that this act is essential. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." It is *essential*, for if you have no life in you, you have nothing that is good, "No life in you." You know the modern theory that there are germs of life in all men, which only need developing. Universal Fatherhood spies some good in all of us, and what he has to do is to educate it and bring it out. This is the philosophical notion, but it is not Christ's way of putting it. He says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." No, not an atom of true life. There is no life to be educated, the sinner is dead, and in him there is no good thing whatever. If ever there is to be any good thing it will have to come into him, it must be an importation ; and it can never come into him, except in connection with his eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ. But suppose a man has many convictions of sin ; he begins to see the evil of sin, and he dreads the wrath to come. This is hopeful ; but I solemnly remind any of you who are in this state, that except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man you have no life, until you have believed in Christ you have no life : until you have washed in his precious blood you are still dead in sin. Oh, do not be satisfied because you feel some legal convictions, do not sit down in thankfulness because you are somewhat disturbed in mind. You never must be satisfied until you have received Christ ; for you have no life in you till you have received Christ. But perhaps you have attended upon ceremonies, you may have been baptized and taken the sacrament. Yes ; but if you have never eaten Christ, taken him into you, you have no life in you ; you are dead while you live. Now,

here is a proof in our text that life does not mean existence as people now talk, who, when they read that "the sinner dies," say that means that he goes out of existence. Ungodly men have an existence in them, but that is a very different thing indeed from eternal life, and you must never confound existence with life or death with non-existence, they are very many leagues apart from one another. The unconverted man not having Christ, has no life in him at all. You members of the church, have you life in you—real life? You have not if you have not eaten the flesh of Christ. You may have been many years professors, but did you ever eat Christ and drink Christ? If not, you have no life in you. You may be excellent moral people, your characters may be patterns to others, there may be everything that is beautiful about you, but if Christ be not in the heart, you are the child of nature, finely dressed, but dead; you are not the living child of grace; you are the statue beautifully chiselled, but, like the cold marble, there is no life in you. Nothing but Christ can be life to the soul, and the highest excellencies to which human nature can reach apart from him fall short of salvation. You must have Jesus, or death abides in you and you abide in death. That is the first virtue of feeding upon Christ, it is absolutely essential.

Now, secondly, it is *vital*. Read the next verse:—"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day;" that is to say, he has been quickened by receiving into himself a whole Christ; he is therefore alive. Though he may be sometimes led to doubt it by his state of heart, yet if he has really received Christ he has been quickened from the dead, and is alive; and what is more, he always shall be alive, for he "hath eternal life." Now, a life that can possibly die out is evidently not eternal life, and the life which the Arminian gets as the result of faith, according to his own statement, is not eternal life, because it may come to an end. Good soul, I know if he has really believed in Jesus he will sweetly find out his mistake, and his life will go on living under temptation and trial, for it shall be in him "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life," it shall be "a living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever." Oh, let us believe the precious doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood *hath* eternal life." He has it now. It is a life that shall last as long as God himself, eternal as Jehovah's throne.

And then, as to the body, that will die, will it not? Yes, but such is the power of the life which Christ puts into us, that the body itself shall rise again. We have our Lord's pledge for it, "I will raise him up again at the last day." As yet the body is dead because of sin, though the spirit is life because of righteousness; but there is a redemption coming for this poor frame, and for this material world in which we dwell. When Christ shall come, then the creation shall be delivered from the bondage under which it was placed, and our material bodies with the rest of creation shall be emancipated. The bodies of the saints delivered from all imperfection, corruption, and defilement, shall live again in the glorious image of Christ, and the Lord shall fulfil his gracious word, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." This eating and drinking of Christ, then, is *vital*.

In the third place it is *substantial*, "for my flesh is *meat indeed*, and my blood is *drink indeed*." This is opposed to the unsubstantial character of symbols. The Jewish feasting was a mere shadow; "but," says Jesus, "my flesh is *meat indeed*." This is also said in contradistinction from carnal food. Carnal food being eaten only builds up the body and then disappears, but it cannot touch the soul; but feeding upon Christ the soul is fed and fed unto life eternal, so that Jesus claims to be "*meat indeed*." Do you ever attend a ministry where the preacher preaches anything and everything but Christ, do you get fed? Well, if you are of a windy sort you may get blown up with the east wind, as wild asses are when they snuff it up; but I know if you are a child of God it does not matter who preaches, or how poor his language, if he preaches Christ you always feel as if you were fed, your soul is satisfied with marrow and fatness when Christ is the subject. There is no such meat for the soul as Christ, and the sweetest refreshment is from the weakest parts of Christ, for God's strength is perfect in his weakness. You say to me "What do you mean?" Well, our Lord in the text says, "my flesh is *meat indeed*," not "my Godhead;" "my blood is *drink indeed*," not my resurrection and ascension. Not "my second advent," but my weakness as man, my death as a man, my sufferings, my griefs, my groans, these are the best food for believers. Do you not find it so? O I rejoice to hear of Christ as coming a second time, but there are times when that doctrine does not yield me an atom of comfort. The brightest stars that charm the sky for a poor benighted pilgrim are those which burn around the cross. Strange that we should turn to that spot where sorrow culminated to find our purest comfort, but it is so: "my flesh is *meat indeed*,"—Christ in his weakness: "my blood is *drink indeed*"—Christ pouring out his soul unto death, this is the truest and best food of the heart. Now, brethren, if you want to grow in grace, feed on Christ. If you would become strong in the Lord, feed on Christ. If you want a something that will build you up in all parts permanently and well, feed on Christ, for other things are meat and drink, but his flesh is *meat indeed*, and his blood is *drink indeed*. Substantial fare this.

And, lastly, another virtue of this feeding is that it *produces union*. Notice the next verse:—"He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." How wonderful is that word—"dwelleth in me." You get by taking Christ into you as a whole Christ to live in Christ, and Christ in you. There is this difference between the two privileges:—to live in Christ is the peace of justification. You believe in him, you trust yourself with him, you feel that you died with him and that you rose with him, that you have gone to heaven with him, and that, therefore, you are accepted in him, and so you live in him. For him to live in you is another thing, namely, the peace of sanctification, for when you have fed on Jesus he enters into you and abides in you, living again in you. He speaks through your lips, loves with your heart, looks through your eyes, works with your hands, and witnesses among the sons of men by your tongues: he lives in you. Oh, wondrous union! Blessed union. The next verse makes it more wonderful still, for it says "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

Three living things ; the living Father, the living Son, and then the living believer. There is the Father with life in himself as God ; then there is the Son as Mediator, God-man, deriving life from the Father ; and then the believer, taking the life which came from God through Jesus Christ. O blessed union this, not merely with Jesus, but through Jesus with the Father ! So that Christ says, " I live, and because I live ye shall live also." He lives by the Father, and we live by him, and all this because we receive him and feed upon him. Oh, my soul, I charge thee, open thy mouth wide after Christ, and take him into thy very self. Give him a lodging in thy heart, ay, let him dwell for ever in the best pavilion of thy nature, in the rarest place of thy soul. Hunger after him, feed on him every day, and when thou hast so done, and he dwells in thee and thou in him ; then tell others about him, and spread his dear name abroad, that hungry, perishing sinners may know that there is corn in Egypt and bread to be had in Jesus, and may come and eat and drink of him as thou hast done. I charge you, brothers and sisters, remember this, and the Lord bless you, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John vi. 26—65.

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"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

"And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."—Ezekiel xvi. 62, 63.

A VERY extraordinary chapter this sixteenth of Ezekiel! A minister could scarcely read it in public: he certainly would not like to explain its metaphors to a general audience, nor are we called upon to do so. To read it in private is another thing, and to have it read for you by the Holy Spirit, and to be made to see, and to feel its meaning, not merely as describing the Israelites, but as very much setting forth yourself, is a very different matter. Believe me, it is a lesson which, if it be well learned, will never be forgotten. It is a part of the Holy Spirit's business to convince us of sin; and when he takes a chapter like this, and puts us through our paces verse by verse, and makes us eat the bitter herbs which each verse contains, and feel as if we were drinking the water into which the dust of our idols had been cast, when they had been broken and ground down, like the golden calf of the Israelites; when he makes us feel the grits between our teeth in every drop we drink, I say it is a lesson well worth receiving, and one that is likely to stick by us all our days.

There are two very wonderful things in this chapter. Which is the more wonderful it were hard to tell. The first is the extraordinary *sin of Israel*. God speaks of it in the strongest imaginable language: he represents Judah's sin as being greater than the sins of Sodom and Samaria, though both Sodom and Samaria had been destroyed for their abominations. He compares Judah's backslidings to the lewdness of a woman who forgets her marriage compact, and sins egregiously with many paramours, adding filthiness to filthiness; and so he makes sin to appear exceeding sinful, as a violation of the heart's love to God and the soul's chastity towards the Most High. A very wonderful thing is sin, as set forth in this chapter! The other marvellous thing is *God's*

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grace: how, when he began with Israel, he found her like an infant cast out in her blood, unwaddled and unwashed, and he took her up in all her filthiness and said to her, "Live," and washed and cleansed her, and clothed her, and hung her ears with jewels, and then when she grew to riper years she turned aside from him—turned his mercies into occasions of provocation, and made his blessings to be instruments of sin. He describes himself as pardoning her again and again, and yet she continued to invent new sins, looking down all the while upon her sisters Sodom and Samaria, and reckoning herself very superior to them, and yet behaving worse than they, and going deeper and deeper into rebellion against the Lord. Yet his mercy follows her, his love still pursues her; and he makes the chapter to culminate in mercy with such words as these—"Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."

Two words, if you can learn them, will teach you the deepest practical wisdom—*sin* and *grace*. No one ever measured either of them—except One, and he, when he measured them, was in a bloody sweat, and poured out his soul unto death. George Herbert quaintly sings—

"Philosophers have measured mountains,
Fathomed the depths of seas, of states, and kings,
Walk'd with a staff to heaven, and traced fountains,
But there are two vast, spacious things,
The which to measure it doth more behove:
Yet few there are that sound them; Sin and Love."

Only our suffering lover, the Lord Jesus Christ, knows the two to their perfection. May we be helped to enter a little further into the double secret while we commune together.

The first exercise to which I shall invite you is this: let us think of *the condition into which the grace of God has brought all believers*. God is pacified towards them. "When I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." Then, secondly, let us think of *the knowledge which has been imparted thus to all believers*—they know the covenant, they know the Lord, and they know themselves; and they are made to remember and to be confounded. Finally, in the third and principal place, let us dwell upon *the silence which henceforth and for ever is induced in all believers*. "Thou shalt never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done."

I. So, then, first of all, let us review THE BLESSED CONDITION INTO WHICH EVERY BELIEVER IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HAS BEEN BROUGHT BY THE SOVEREIGN ACT OF GOD'S MERCY. He has been brought into such a condition that God can say to him, "I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done."

The Hebrew word which here sets forth forgiveness and pardon properly signifies to *cover* a thing with that which adheres and sticks to

the thing covered: not with dry dust or leaves, which could be easily removed, but with glue or pitch, so that the thing hidden cannot easily be brought to sight again. The same word is used concerning Noah's ark. "Thou shalt pitch it, or cover it, within and without with pitch." All the planks were to be covered with the pitch; not with a filmy paint that might barely colour them, but with a thick pitch which would cover them; a sticky substance which would adhere to the substance of the wood, and penetrate it and cover it altogether. When God forgives our sin he covers us as completely as the wood of the ark was covered within and without with pitch: our sin is covered and hidden right away from his observation. Child of God, I beg you to think of this for a moment, God is pacified towards you because your sin is covered—all of it; yea, it is all gone. As far as God is concerned your sin has ceased to be. He laid it on Jesus Christ your substitute, and he took it and bore the penalty of it—nay the thing itself; he, as your scapegoat, carried your sin right away, and it is lost in the wilderness of forgetfulness. Into the depths of the sea hath he cast your iniquities. In his own tomb hath he buried your offences. What saith the Scripture? "He has finished transgression and made an end of sin." Grand word! *Made an end of it.* And if there be an end of it, why there is an end of it, and it has gone. This day, O believing child of God, there is fulfilled towards you that gracious word: "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Through faith in Jesus your transgressions are all removed as far from you as the east is from the west. The depths have covered your sins; there is not one of them left. The Lord is pacified for *all* that we have done, so that no ground of quarrel remains.

O believer, God is pacified towards you, for your sin is covered; it is put away, all of it, and altogether. Since you have believed in Jesus Christ your sin has not become dimly visible, neither by searching may it be seen as a shadow in the distance, but God seeth it no more for ever. He has not merely taken away some of its results, some of the fiercer judgments that might have broken forth had not Christ intervened; but he has utterly removed all the penal consequences of it. The sin is covered in the most emphatic sense. God has turned away all the fierceness of his anger, and you may say, "O God, I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." The many, the countless hosts of sin that you have committed since your childhood are all scattered as a cloud, and the one black sin, which cost you more regret than many scores of others, has been removed as a thick cloud. The one repeated sin which grew into a habit which seemed as though it mastered you completely, and brought you into utter bondage—it too has died into the tomb of the great Substitute. They are all gone—no enemy remaineth. In the sepulchre of Christ they are buried never to rise. Not one of these dead things shall live, for the efficacy of the death which slew them is eternal. They cannot rise against you from the grave; no, not one of them, while sun and moon endure, nay, while

God endureth, for, he saith it, "They shall not be mentioned against thee any more, for ever." "Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" It is divinely sweet to think of this! God is pacified towards his people for all that they have done, altogether pacified, for their sins have ceased to be.

And this is not occasionally true, but *always* true; not only so in happier moments, when we enjoy a sense of it, but *always*, whether we have a sense of it or not. The standing of a believer does not depend upon his recognition of his standing. There are times when, if he could have all the world for it, he could not read his title clear—nay, he could not spell the capital letters of that title. There are times when he sees his sin, but cannot see his pardon; yet is he pardoned for all that—pardoned while self-condemned. The Israelites, when they were inside their houses, could not see the blood sprinkled on their door-posts. How could they? By what strange process would they be able to see the blood outside the door while they sat within at the table? No, and it was not *their* seeing the blood that saved them; for if you turn to the Book of Exodus you find the Lord saying, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." God always saw the blood: this was the main point in the matter, and therefore it was sprinkled where the destroying angel could see it as he flew upon his errand of wrath. Glory be to God, when I cannot see the blood of Christ myself, my God can see it. If I have ever looked, by an act of faith, to the Lord Jesus, I am saved; if I am resting in him, I am forgiven; and when my eye of faith is dim, and my sense of rest in Christ is overloaded with a yet deeper sense of my own unworthiness, yet still my standing is not altered, my security is not affected, the pacifying of the Lord towards me is not changed one jot or tittle. At all times, in the dark as well as in the light, in down-castings as well as in upliftings, the Lord is pacified towards his people.

I would to God that the Lord's people grasped this more fully, and lived in the power of it more completely. May God grant we may! O my soul, sinful and unworthy though thou be, there is a peace established between thee and thy God which never will be broken—a league which never will be violated. God has thoughts of peace towards thee. Does not the word so mean? "When I am *pacified*;" "when I am *peace*-ified;" "when I am made peace towards thee." God thinks of nothing but peace towards his children. "Peace, peace," saith he. He is the God of peace, the fruit of his Spirit is peace, the very name of his Son is peace. The heaven to which he is bringing us is everlasting peace, and even now the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. The believer goes forth with joy, and is led forth with peace. His heart, his mind, his conscience are filled with peace towards God. There is peace, there is nothing but peace, between my soul and God. Oh, what a joyous thought this is! Grasp it, Christian, and let your spirit exult in it.

And all this, remember, is written in our text concerning a people who had plunged into wondrous sins. I have already remarked that I could not explain all that God has said about Israel in this chapter; it would be improper. Nor do I think any man ought to try to tell another all the evil which he has seen in himself. Sometimes we talk to our fellow Christians about our own sense of unworthiness, but we are not always

speaking to edification. It has happened to me sometimes that the brother to whom I have spoken of myself has not believed a word I have said. He has looked me in the face, and he has said, "You are not well, I fear. I am sorry to see you so low in spirits." Indeed, I only spoke the truth, and did not tell him one half of the unworthiness I felt; but he did not know the wormwood and the gall, nor ought I to have wished to make him drink of my cup. That same brother, perhaps, has come to me with his story of his own failures and transgressions and sins, and then it has been my turn to wonder. I have looked at him and I have said—"Bless you! I wish I were half as good as you are, and half as faithful in my Master's service." Every man must bear his own burden: my friend does not know my humiliation before God, neither do I see any unworthiness in my friend, compared with what he sees and feels. We need not tell our neighbours all that we feel about ourselves, any more than this chapter can ever be explained to every carnal ear. But oh, brethren, no man living has ever exaggerated his own sin or thought too meanly of himself. There does not live beneath the copes of heaven any man whose sense of sin is as deep as the sin really is. I find when I am talking with enquirers, and they are overburdened with a sense of sin, that the only thing to say to them is, "It is all true, every bit you are saying." "Oh, but," they say, "you do not know." "No," I say, "nor yet do you. You are ten times worse than you think you are." "Oh sir, but I feel myself to be utterly lost." "Yes, and so you are; you are only feeling the truth." "But I feel as if I were driven to despair." "And so you ought to be, for if you are looking to yourself, there is nothing but despair for you." Do not interrupt the young convert when he begins to say that he is distressed by a sense of sin, and if he describes sin in dreadful terms, let him go on to do so, for the more he abhors sin the better. The trembling penitent is near the truth, for his sin is indeed great and terrible. If you make him out to be a little sinner, you will next offer him a little Saviour, a little Christ, and a little gospel. No, let him go on with that sense of sin; I would even pray God to make him feel it more and more; meanwhile it is your privilege to present to him an infinite atonement and a God willing and able to forgive. Tell him that God sent not his Son into the world to save the righteous, or to call those to repentance who have no sin to be repented of—that the whole scheme of redemption is so magnificent because it deals with an infinite evil, and it is made to a grand scale, because the mischief it has to deal with is hideous beyond all conception. If a man feels sin to be unutterably horrible, so much the better. Do not try to get low thoughts of sin, but be humbled in the dust, for then Christ is glorified. The greatness of the sin reveals the greatness of the redeeming sacrifice, and the direful nature of the disease declares the infinity of that Physician's skill who is able to put it all away.

Child of God, return with grateful restfulness to the memory of your complete deliverance from the wrath of God due to sin. God is pacified towards you concerning all your sin, thus described in all its heinousness, hideousness, and horror. Whatever conception of it you have now obtained, and it may be a very, very alarming one, yet in all its terrible-ness God is pacified towards you concerning your sin. Although your

conception may fall far short of the truth, yet, as far as that whole truth about sin is concerned, God is pacified towards you in the person of his dear Son. I wonder what God's thought of sin is. He has thrown some little light upon it in this chapter, but when he hung up his dear Son upon the tree then he declared sin to be a monster indeed. When God himself bore the pangs of death that he might save his creatures from sin, when all the waves and billows of sin's stormy deep rolled over the incarnate God, and when he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" what must his thoughts have been concerning sin! But God never thought worse of sin than it is. He only thought the truth, and it is as sin is in its truth, and as Jesus felt it in its truth when he bore it on the tree—it is as in that true idea of sin that he has put it all away, and he is pacified towards us to-day.

Come, dear children, come into your Father's bosom, he is pacified towards you. Come back, ye wanderers; come home, ye troubled ones; the great and glorious God, who is exceeding angry at sin, whose whole nature boils like a cauldron against everything that is evil—is nevertheless pacified, completely pacified, even towards the ungodly and the guilty, through Jesus Christ our Lord; and when you come believing in him who died for the ungodly, and resting in him who was a sacrifice for sinners, you shall feel that he is pacified towards you, and all is well. There is our blessed standing: God help us to rejoice in it.

II. We pass on, secondly, to notice WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED IN THE PROCESS OF REACHING THIS PEACEFUL STANDING. We have learned three things. I do not say that all Christians have clearly discovered them, I wish they had; but I do know some Christians who have learned these very points thoroughly.

First we have learned *salvation by a covenant*. "I will establish my covenant with thee." He who knows how to pronounce the word "covenant" is on the road towards being a thorough theologian. Salvation by covenant! The thought is charming, for we were lost by a covenant. Father Adam stood for us, and represented us in the old covenant of works. If Adam will keep that covenant, he and all his children shall be blest. Alas, our foundation was too frail, our first parent was not able to bear the responsibility of the covenant; and therefore he fell, and we all fell in him to our fatal cost. Some have inquired, "Was this just?" Do not raise that question, because that is the loophole of your hope. The devils, when they fell, fell each one for himself, and so they could never rise again; but we fell by another in a covenant made with another. Here, then, was the way to restore us again. As we sinned representatively it was possible for us to satisfy the law by a representative. Here was the opening for the way of salvation. By a second covenant-head man may be redeemed, and therefore Jesus Christ comes, the second Adam, and God makes a covenant with him, which covenant runs thus—"If he will bear the penalty of sin—if he will keep the law, then, all that are in him shall be delivered from every sin, and the righteousness of the second Adam shall be imputed to them, and they shall be loved and blessed as if they were righteous." Oh, matchless mystery of love! Have you ever learned this? Some of you young people who have lately been converted, have you ever learned the doctrine of the covenant? Have you seen what it is to be

in Christ, and accepted in Christ, because the Lord hath made him to be a covenant for the people—a leader and commander to the people? And have you nestled down beneath our Lord's perfect atonement, and his perfect righteousness, and said, "These are mine, for he is my Adam, and I am in him; and God saves me now, not because of what I did or am, but because of what my covenant surety was and is. I am saved through him, my standing is in him"? He who understands this covenant has learned something very full of consolation, for he knows that it is a covenant which he cannot break, for it was not made with him personally, but made for him in his great substitute and surety, Christ Jesus. Christ has not broken the covenant, and only he could do so. He kept it, and therefore the promise is sure to all the seed, and it is a covenant "ordered in all things, and sure"—a covenant from which God will never turn aside. "My covenant I will not break," saith he, "nor alter the word that has gone out of my lips." He hath sworn by himself, because he could swear by no greater—by two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, that he might give strong consolation to the heirs of the promise.

Certain brethren tremble when they hear us thus discourse upon the believer's privilege and security, but we cannot help that. Isaac lives at home and rejoices in his birthright, and if Ishmael and his mother love slavery better they must have it. Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." As for those who are the children of the promise, and inherit through the promise, their name is Laughter, as the name of Isaac was, and they shall rejoice, for they are the true heirs; neither shall they ever be driven out, for in Isaac was the seed to be called for ever. So saith the Lord, and so shall it stand. It is a blessed thing to learn the covenant of grace.

The next thing we have learned while reaching our happy condition of peace with God is the lesson that *Jehovah is indeed God*. Read those solemn words, "Thou shalt know that I am the Lord." To be saved in a way that makes us know that God is God is to be taught aright. I do believe that this is one of the lessons least known throughout the church; and in the world it is not known at all. That God is God is easy to say but hard to know. I learned it when the Lord brought me to himself, and I have been learning it more and more in many ways as he has taught me and brought me low before him. I have learned his *justice*, and if ever I hear men talking about the injustice of everlasting punishment for sin, I have found no echo in my conscience to that observation, because, if I could be lifted up into God's place, I feel that the very first thing I should have to do would be to eternally condemn such a guilty thing as I myself have been and am. I feel it. As I have judged my own soul, I have had to pronounce over it that very sentence which God pronounces over all the ungodly—"Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." I have had to say "Amen" in my soul to all the divine denunciations of evil. I have thus in my conscience learned that he is a just God, and thus has one of the great attributes of Deity been known to me.

I have also been made to learn *his sovereignty*. I remember the time when I thought that if God saved everybody in the world but me I

could not blame him. I have had to come to his feet and feel, "I have no rights, and make no claims." Shaking my hands free of anything like an appeal to what I am as his creature, or as his servant, I have felt that I have forfeited all the rights of creatureship by my sin, and I have put myself absolutely at his disposal, beseeching him to reveal his undeserved favour to me. My ear has even been tutored to find music in that awful declaration, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But, oh, this doctrine does not seem to be known by a large number of people. They will not come to it; they cannot bite the dust nor bow so low as that. "Man is a noble creature, and his rights must be considered." "God must deal alike by all." Many are these proud and arrogant boastings, which to my soul read like blasphemy, and yet men calling themselves Christian ministers give utterance to them. This I know, that he is God, and doeth as he pleases with his grace. He taught me this ere he stretched out the silver sceptre, and said, "I am pacified towards thee."

And oh, how we have to learn *his power*. The power of God is seen by the natural eye in some measure in storms and tempests; but, believe me, it is never seen with the inner eye by any man so well as when the Lord overcomes his sin. He has seen his sin, and he has felt no more able to grapple with it than the sear leaf with the hurricane, and yet the Lord has suddenly stopped the fury of that sin, and delivered the man, so that he has said, "Now I know that thou art God, for who but God could have done this for me? Who but thyself could have chained my imperious passions and broken the iron yoke from off my neck?" Then has the man felt the omnipotence of Jehovah.

Above all we learn that precious word, "*God is love*"; but there is no understanding it until you are actually broken down under a sense of sin, and are led to see that your sin deserves the hottest hell. Then when you hear the Lord say, "But, nevertheless, for my own sake have I forgiven thee, and through Jesus Christ my Son have I put all this sin of thine away: it shall never be mentioned against thee any more for ever"—then the eye looks up and says, "Love! I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee!" Such love! Such matchless love! Such amazing love! One cannot talk about it without longing to get away to some secret place to pour out your soul before God with tears instead of words, to think that he should forgive: so freely, so richly, and so completely forgive. If you would know the Godhead, you must behold it in the person of Jesus Christ while you look up to him and see him through your tears. In him you see yourself crucified as a rebel and a traitor, deserving nothing but wrath; and then in him you see God over all exalted, dispensing mercy, not because of man's deservings, or even because of man's prayers or tears, or anything like goodness in man, but simply because he wills to do it, to display the majesty of his stupendous grace in passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin.

The third lesson which is connected with our deliverance is this, "that thou mayest remember and be confounded." We have learned *ourselves*. To remember and to be confounded—that is not comfortable. Who likes to remember and be confounded? Some of you good people can remember your whole lives, but you do not feel at all confounded. Why should

you? With so much of your own excellence to glory in, why should you be confounded? But, remember, if the Lord is ever pacified towards you, you will remember and you will be confounded: so that no good can come from the self-contentment which you are so loth to lose. You will be confounded if ever you are pardoned. You will be confounded at being unable to discover any excuse for your sin. Once you could have found twenty excuses, and had your choice out of them; but now that the Lord has forgiven you, you cannot find one, and as you turn them all up—those old excuses of yours—those fig leaves of yours, with which you once hoped to cover your nakedness, you despise them, and think you never saw such flimsy things. You are doubly confounded to think that ever you invented such excuses—confounded to think that you could have been such a fool as to dream that there was any reason in your excuses, that what made sin worse should have seemed to you at any time to make it better. You are confounded now to think how it was that you lived all those years in sin and unbelief. I was utterly amazed to think that I had not believed in Jesus Christ long before. Was that all—to trust in Christ? Why, I had been going all round the world to do something, and feel something, and be something, and there it was: I was to be nothing, Christ was to be everything, and I was to be thus saved. I was just to take salvation freely as a gift to me. I was confounded. I could not invent an excuse for having remained in unbelief, though until the Lord was pacified with me I stubbornly said, “You know I cannot believe.” I had hosts of excuses, while I was unforgiven, but they were all gone when mercy forgave me. Have you ever tried to put two things straight before your eyes—your own life and God’s character: you before God and God before you? Have you not felt that you could not look at them both, for you were confounded and could not comprehend them? You used to say, “Oh, that sin was the result of my bringing up, that was the product of bad example.” Or you passed it off by saying, “Ah, I made a mistake that time.” Now that you are saved your conduct seems to you to have been all mistakes, all blunders, all mischiefs, all bad, all horrible. You are confounded, do not know what to say, you cannot defend yourself. Oh, what a blessed thing it is when a man is so confounded that he cannot speak for himself any more, but leaves Jesus Christ to speak for him,—when he is so confounded that all he can do is to sit still and admire, and wonder, and adore, and love, and bless, and praise, and magnify God for such unexpected mercy.

“Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter where there’s room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”

Why, didst thou love *me*? Why didst thou bear with *me* so long? Why was I gently led to yield myself to thy sway? Why were my eyes opened? Why was I not left to wilful blindness as others were? I thought once I could have explained it, but now I cannot, for it is past finding out. “O God, I am confounded. Thy very love confounds me as much as my sin does. I am in a maze, I am perplexed, I am astounded. Thus is the word fulfilled. “Thou shalt remember and be confounded.”

My brethren and sisters, I hope the Lord, when he brought you to know himself, taught you these three things—your standing in the covenant, his own glory as the God of that covenant, and your own less-than-nothingness as he utterly confounds and astounds you, both with *your* guilt and with *his* mercy.

III. The last thing is this—THE SILENCE WHICH IS FOR EVER INDUCED. “Thou shalt never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame.” It takes a great deal to fill a man’s mouth, and almost as much to shut it. Some men’s mouths never will be filled till the sexton gives them a spade full of mould, for their greed is insatiable, and half the world would not be enough for them. Some men’s mouths never will be stopped, except by the coffin lid. Their motto is, “While I live I’ll crow”; and so they will, for boasting is bred in their bone, and will come out of them. Though they have nothing to boast of, yet as long as they breathe they will brag. But when God saves a man he takes means to end his self-exaltation most effectually, so that he will never open his mouth any more in his own praise. He stops him from all boasting about what he is and what he has been, and what he thinks he shall be. If you find any man talking about how excellently he has lived, and what a commendable person he has been, you may be sure that God has never been pacified towards him. When a man cries, “But is not our morality something? Is there not a great deal to be said in favour of those who are sober and righteous?”—you may know that God has never been pacified towards that man, for if it were so he would never open his mouth any more about his morality; he would be as ashamed of his morality as other men are of their outward sins, for he would see it to be a poor imperfect thing at best. Our morality is a very pretty thing, when people look at it who are in the blindness of nature; but when we bring our morality under the microscope, and look at it as God looks at it, what a horribly immoral thing this so-called morality is. You begin to look below the surface, and you discover that a certain man refrained from outward sin, not because he would not have delighted to do wrong, but because he was a little too shrewd, and did not want to injure his own interests. He was not such a fool as to fall into vulgar sin; that is to say, his selfishness saved him. Sometimes the man who did actually transgress, had more generous impulses than the other who did not sin, because his sneaking selfishness kept him within the lines of outward consistency. When you come to look at very much of morality, it will not bear inspection. It is a very pretty thing, like the moss and the fungus growing out of putridity: a very pretty thing until you understand where it came from. If any man who believes himself to have been moral and sinless will only begin to look at the reasons why he has been so innocent, and search himself, he will often discover that inside all that purity of his there has been a mass of pride, self-conceit, self-seeking, indifference to God, and every detestable thing. When the Lord shows the man all this, and casts him down into the ditch till he abhors himself, and then cleanses him in the precious blood till he is pacified towards him, he will never open his mouth about that matter any more.

Neither will a man who has been cleansed in this way open his mouth any more against divine sovereignty. It seems to some

minds to be a very fine thing to talk about the rights of moral agents, and rail at all idea of the Lord exercising the prerogatives of kingship. They love to go to the verge of blasphemy to show that they are not so foolish as to be Calvinistic. When the spiritual dandy hears the Biblical doctrine that he has sinned against God, and that if he is to be saved it must be all of grace, he is too fine a fellow to believe the truth; he does not want to enter heaven like a criminal, or to receive pardon like a convict; he inclines to a more genteel gospel. Now, if the Lord is pacified towards that man, you will never hear another word of that sort from him. "Oh, no," he will say, "let the Lord live for ever, and let him be king." He is the man above all others who loves to hear of God as absolute. He knows how gracious, how strong, how truly good he is. He has heard the language of Paul ringing in his heart as well as in his ears,—“Nay, but O, man, who art thou that repliest against God?” And he has answered, “I dare not reply, for I am less than nothing; and I would not reply if I could, for I love God and I bless his name.” One of the sweetest notes that ever falls upon that man’s ear is—“The Lord reigneth.” He loves to think that Jehovah does reign, and if it were in his power to restrict his reign and abridge his absolute authority, he would not do so. He wishes him to be king for ever, and sit as Lord upon the floods world without end. In that matter, then, the man’s mouth is shut for ever.

So, also, dear friends, this way of salvation shuts a man’s mouth as to all murmuring and complaining against God upon any score whatever; for, saith he, “If the Lord has pardoned me, let him do what he wills with me.” Our proud flesh exalts itself against the will of the Lord, and says, “It is hard that you should always be poor when you would have done so much good with money. It is hard that you should be so often ill while you are so useful. It is hard that you should have so little talent, when God knows that if you had great abilities you would have been so zealous, and led the van in the church of Christ, for you love him so much.” Ah, dear friends, but when grace forgives us we never talk so. We say, “No, my Lord, I am so unworthy that if thou dost favour me to be a doorkeeper in thy house I will be grateful for it. If I am permitted at the last to get inside the gates of heaven to sit amongst thy children as the meanest of them, I shall be for ever grateful to thy mighty love, and bless thy gracious name. I have no quarrels to pick with thee. I have no demands to make of thee. ‘Not as I will, but as thou wilt.’ If I can glorify thee on a bed of sickness, I will lie there, and cough to thy glory. If I can glorify thee in a mud cottage, I will dwell there, and starve on a few pence a week to thy glory. If I can honour thee in rags, or in the poorhouse, so let it be. Yea, if in death it will honour thee for me to have a pauper’s funeral or none at all, so let it be. I belong to thee from this day forth. I am such a sinner, so forgiven, and so indebted to almighty grace that I can never open my mouth any more to find fault, for thou hast dealt so kindly and so lovingly with me.” May that spirit rest upon you, beloved friends.

Now, I wish that I could hope that all of you had tasted of the grace and love of God as some of us have done; but I dare not flatter you; I fear that many of you are utter strangers to this

matter. It ought to encourage every one here who has not found peace with God to hear us tell of what *we* feel of our own sinfulness, because, sinner, where one sinner gets through there is room for another. If there is a prison door, and that door is broken down, and one gets out, another man who is in the same prison may safely say, "Why should not I escape too?" Supposing we were all beasts in Noah's ark, and we could not get down from the ark to the ground except by going down that slanting stage which most of the painters have sketched when they have tried to depict the scene. Well, we must go down that stage. Are you afraid? Are you, sheep and hares, afraid that the staging will not bear you up? Listen, then. I am an elephant, and I have come down out of the ark over that bridge, and therefore it is clear that all of you who are smaller than I am can come over too. There is strength enough to bear up the hare and the coney, the ox and the sheep, for it carried the elephant. The way down has been trodden by that heavy, lumping creature, it will do for you, whoever you may be. Ever since the Lord Jesus Christ saved me, I made up my mind to one thing, namely, that I should never meet another person who was harder to save than I. Somebody said to me once when I was a child, when it was very dark, and I was afraid to go out, "What are you afraid of? You won't meet anything uglier than yourself." Surely as to my spiritual condition that is true, I never did meet anything uglier than myself, and I never shall. And if there is a great, big, black, ugly sinner here, I say, sinner, you are not uglier than I was by nature, and yet the Lord Jesus Christ loved me. Why should he not love you too? I tell you that though Jesus Christ is omniscient, and it is saying a great thing to say what he could not see, yet I do venture to say that Jesus Christ could not see anything in me to love. What if he cannot see anything good in you? Then we are on a par, and yet I know he loves me, why not you? That he loves me I know. Bless his name, I know he loves me now, and I love him, too. If he loved me when there was nothing in me to love, why should he not love you when there is nothing in you to love? Oh, turn that ugly face towards the lovely Saviour, and trust in him. I put it in a pleasant way, and you smile, but I want to get it into your hearts: I want some poor, trembling sinner to say, "I shall recollect that. I did think myself an ugly sinner, but I will come to Christ, and trust him." If you do so, you will never regret it, but you will bless God for ever and ever, and so shall I: and when we get to heaven we will talk about it, and we will say, "Here we are, a pair of huge, horrible sinners, we came to Jesus Christ, and he took us in, and, blessed be his name, we will praise him as long as ever we live." That we will, I warrant you. Do you not feel sure of it? God bless you, for Christ's sake."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm li.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—51, 546.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GODLY FEAR AND ITS GOODLY CONSEQUENCE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence : and his children shall have a place of refuge."—Proverbs xiv. 26.

IN the Book of Proverbs you meet with sentences of pithy wisdom, which, to all appearance, belong entirely to this world, and pertain to the economy of the life that now is. I do not know whether it is true, but it was said that years ago our friends in Scotland had a little book widely circulated and read by all their children, which consisted of the Proverbs of Solomon, and that it was the means of making the Scotch, as a generation, more *canny*, shrewd, and wiser in business than any other people. If it be so, I should suggest that such a book be scattered throughout England as well, and, indeed, anywhere and everywhere. The book might have been written, in some parts of it, by Franklin or Poor Richard, for it contains aphorisms and maxims of worldly wisdom, pithy but profound, sometimes poetic, but always practical. Has it never surprised you that there should be such sentences as these in the book of inspiration—secular proverbs, for so they are—secular proverbs intermixed with spiritual proverbs—the secular and the spiritual all put together without any division or classification. You might have expected to find one chapter dedicated to worldly business, and another chapter devoted to golden rules concerning the spiritual life ; but it is not so. They occur without any apparent order, or at any rate without any order of marked division between the secular and the spiritual : and I am very glad of it. The more I read the Book of Proverbs, the more thankful I am that there is no such division, because the hard and fast line by which men of the world, and I fear some Christians, have divided the secular from the spiritual, is fraught with innumerable injuries. Religion, my dear friends, is not a thing for churches and chapels alone ; it is equally meant for counting-houses and workshops, for kitchens and drawing-rooms. The true Christian is not only to be seen in the singing of hymns and the offering of prayers, but he is to

be distinguished by the honesty and integrity, the courage and the faithfulness, of his ordinary character. In the streets and in the market-places, or wherever else the providence of God may call him, he witnesses the good confession. It is easy to secularize religion in a wrong sense. There are many, I doubt not, that desecrate the pulpit to worldly ends. How can it be otherwise, if "*livings*" are to be bought and sold? I cannot doubt that the sacred desk has been a place simply for earning emoluments, or for gathering fame, and that sacred oratory has been as mean in the sight of God as the common language of the streets. I do not doubt that many people have put religion as a show-card into their business, and have tried to make money by it. Like Mr. By-ends, they thought that if, by being religious, they could get a good wife,—if, by being religious they could be introduced into respectable society,—if, by being religious they would bring some excellent religious customers to their shop, and if, indeed, by being religious they could get themselves to be esteemed, it would be a very proper thing. Now, this is making religion into irreligion; this is turning Christianity into selfishness; this is the Judas-spirit of putting Christ up for pieces of silver, and making as good a bargain as you can out of him; and this will lead to damnation, and nothing short of it, in the case of anybody who deliberately attempts it. Woe to that man! He is a son of perdition. Better for him had he never been born. Instead of profaning the spiritual, the right thing is to spiritualise the secular till the purity of your motives and the sanctity of your conscience in ordinary pursuits shall cause the division to vanish. Why, there should be about an ordinary meal enough religion to make it resemble a sacrament. Our garments, we should wear, and wear them out in the service of the Lord, until they acquired as much sanctity as the very vestments of a consecrated priesthood. There should be a devout spirit in everything we do. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him." No, it is not a less holy thing to be the Christian merchant than to be the Christian minister. It is not a less holy thing to be the mother of mercy to your own children than to be the sister of mercy to the sick children of other people in the hospital ward. It is not a less sacred thing to be the married wife than it is to be the virgin consecrated to Christ. Wherever ye are, if ye discharge the duties of your calling as in the sight of God, ye can by prayer and thanksgiving saturate your lives with godliness and make every action drip with sanctity, till, like Ashur of old, it shall be said of you that you have dipped your foot in oil. So shall you leave the mark of grace wherever your footstep is put. Let us endeavour to be so minded, and forbear to sort out our actions, saying to ourselves, "In this thing I am to be a Christian: in the other thing I am to be a business man." "Business is business," says somebody. Yes, I know it is, and it has no business to be such business as it very often is. It ought to be christianized, and the Christian that does not christianize business is a dead Christian—a savourless salt, wherewith shall such salt be savoured when the salt itself has lost its savour? Mix up your proverbs. Be as practical as Poor Richard counsels, and then be as spiritual as Christ commands. You need not be a fool because you are a Christian. There is no necessity to be outwitted in business.

There is no necessity to be less shrewd, less sharp. There is no necessity to be less pushing because you are a Christian. True religion is sanctified common sense, and if some people had got a little common sense with their religion, and some others had got a little more religion with their common sense, they would both be the better for it. And this Book of Proverbs is just this common sense, which is the rarest of all senses, saturated and sanctified by the presence of God and the power of the gospel ennobling the pursuits of the creature.

Let this suffice by way of introduction. Now we are going to plunge into the text. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge."

I. WHAT IS THIS FEAR OF THE LORD? The expression is used in Scripture for all true godliness. It is constantly the short way of expressing real faith, hope, love, holiness of living, and every grace which makes up true godliness. But why was fear selected? Why did not it say, "Trust in God is strong confidence"? Has not religion been commonly described by faith rather than by fear? In legal indictments it is said sometimes of a man that he, "not having the fear of God before his eyes," did so and so. Why is the *fear* of God selected? One would say that, according to the general theology of this period, we ought to have selected *faith*. But the Spirit of God has not given us the phrase—faith in God. He puts fear, because, after all, there is a something more tender, more touching, more real about fear than there is about some people's faith, which faith may very readily verge upon presumption. But in speaking of fear we must always discriminate. There is a fear with which a Christian has nothing to do. The fear of the slave who dreads a task-master we have now escaped from. At least we ought to be free from such bondage, for we are not under the law, which is the task-master, but we are under grace, which is a paternal spirit, and has given us the liberty of sons. Brethren, if you labour under any dread of God which amounts to a slavish fear of him, do not cultivate it. But ask God to give you that perfect love of which John tells us that it casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. Do not be afraid of God whatever he does with you. The kind of fear commended in the text is not such as appals the senses and scares the thoughts. It is a fear that has not anything like being afraid mixed with it. It is quite another kind of fear. It is what we commonly call filial fear of God, like the child's fear of his father. Just think for a minute, what is a child's fear of his father? I do not mean a naughty child, a child that is obstinate, but a young man who loves his father,—who is his father's friend, his father's most familiar acquaintance. Thank God, some of us have children whom we can look upon as near and dear friends as well as dutiful sons and daughters, to whom we can speak with much confidence and love. What is the fear that a well-ordered, well-disciplined, beloved child has of his own father?

Well, first, he has an awe of him, which arises out of admiration of his character. If his father be what he should be, he is to that son a real model. The youth looks upon what his father does as exactly what he would like to do, and what he aims to copy. His judgment is to his son almost infallible. At any rate, if he sees reason to differ from his father, he is a long while before he brings himself to prefer his own

judgment. He has seen his father's wisdom in other matters so often, that he mistrusts his own apprehension, and would rather trust to what his father tells him. He has a profound conviction that his father is good, kind, wise, and could not do anything, or ask him to do anything, which would not promote his own good. So he feels a sort of awe of him—a fear of him—which prevents his questioning what his father does as he would have questioned anybody else. He is prone to conjecture that his father may have got some reason behind that would explain what he does not understand. He would not give another person credit for having that concealed virtue, but he has such an esteem for his father—his dear father, that he fears to raise any questions about his father's character, his conduct, or his conclusions. In fact, that character so rules his admiration and commands his respect, that he does not think of questioning it. Well, now, dear friends, how far higher must be our fear of God in this view of the matter. How could we question him? Nay, whatever he does, we say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." Like Aaron, when his two sons were stricken down, and that as a summary punishment of their transgression, it should be said of us, as it was recorded of him—"He held his peace." Aaron could not say anything against God, however severe the stroke was. So, brethren, we cannot judge God. I hope we have given that folly over. We ought to be afraid to do it. I sometimes tremble; horror takes hold upon me, when I now and then meet with a brother or sister (I hope in Christ) who will tell me that God has taken away a dear child, and they cannot forgive him. "That cannot be right, sir." Oh, it is a dreadful thing for us once to get into such a state of heart that we question anything that God does! No: "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Is it meet, think you, to imagine that our heavenly Father can do anything that is unkind or unwise towards us? It is not possible. The *Lord* has done it. Let that be your ultimatum. We fear him too much to question what he does. Our reverence of him makes us jealous of ourselves.

A child, also, without any fear of his father in the wrong sense, is sure to be very deferential in his father's presence. If his father be in the way, and if quiet be wanted in the house, he will draw his shoes off his feet and check the ebullition of his spirits, lest his father should hear, and he should disturb the unruffled calm. He watches carefully, and studiously guards his conduct, lest anything he does amiss should reach his father's ear, and grieve his father's heart. Now it would be very wrong for a child merely to restrain himself in his father's presence out of respect for him, and then break the bounds with unbridled licentiousness in his father's absence, as I fear many do. But you and I need not fall into this danger, because we are always in the presence of our heavenly Father in every place. Who among us that fears God as he ought would wish to do anything anywhere which is wrong, and offensive to him, seeing that

"Where e'er we roam, where e'er we rest,
We are surrounded still with God?"

Daring were the hardihood that could insult a king to his face, and commit a trespass in his presence. A sense of the presence of God, a

conscience that prompts one to say, "Thou God seest me," fosters in the soul a healthy fear which you can easily see would rather inspirit than intimidate a man. It is a filial, childlike fear, in the presence of one whom we deeply reverence, lest we should do anything contrary to his mind and will. So, then, there is a fear which arises out of a high appreciation of God's character, and a fear of the same kind which arises out of a sense of his presence.

Further, every child, of the sort I have described, fears at any time to intrude upon the father's prerogative. When he is at home he feels that there are some points in which he may take many liberties. Is it not his own home? has he not always been there? But there are some things of which, if they were suggested to him to do, he would say, "Why, it is impossible. Only my father may do that. I cannot give orders as if I were the master. I cannot expect to govern. I am here, and I am glad to be here, but I am under my father, and I must not presume to exercise the control to which he has an exclusive right." Now, that is one of the fears which a child of God has. "No," says he, "how should I venture to stand in the place of God? God bids me: it is not for me to demur or to ask, 'Shall I or shall I not?' That were to usurp the place of ruler, to be a master to myself, to ignore the fact that the Lord is alone the ruler. Such a thing God appoints;" then it is not for me to wish the appointment different. Should it be according to my mind? Am I the comptroller? Is divine providence put under my supervision? "No," says the child of God, "I cannot do anything so inconsistent with a dutiful allegiance." Some things there are which he feels would be arrogating a position unbecoming altogether in a creature, and much more unbecoming in a creature that has received the spirit of fear whereby he cries "Abba, Father." O brethren and sisters, it is well to have a fear of getting to feel great—a fear of getting to feel good—a fear of getting to feel anything that should violate your fealty, or disregard the worshipful reverence you owe to the Most High, as if you took sinister license because you were given a sacred liberty, or refused to do homage because you had received favour. Oh no, the virtuous child does not thus slight his indulgent father; neither must we ever think irreverently of our covenant God.

Holy fear leads us to dread anything which might cause our Father's displeasure. A good child would not do anything which would make his father feel vexed with him. "It vexes me," says he, "if it vexes my father." So let there be always with us a fear to offend our loving God. He is jealous, remember that. It is one of the most solemn truths in the Bible, "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." We might have guessed it, for great love has always that dangerous neighbour jealousy not far off. They that love not have no hate, no jealousy, but where there is an intense, an infinite love, like that which glows in the bosom of God, there must be jealousy. And oh, how jealous he is of the hearts of his people! How determined he is to have all their love! How I have known him to take away the objects of their attachment, one after another—break their idols, and deprive them of their precious vanities—all to get their hearts wholly to himself, because he knew it would never be right with them while they had a divided heart. It was injurious to themselves,

and so he is jealous of that which injures them, and jealous of that which dishonours him.

Let us have this holy fear very strong upon us, and we shall avoid anything which might grieve the Spirit of God. A true child of the kind I have tried to describe—and I hope there are some about—is always afraid of doing anything which might cast a suspicion upon his love and his respect to his father. If he feels that he has done something which might appear discourteous, or be interpreted as akin to rebellion, he is eager to explain at once that he did not mean it so. Or, if he has made a mistake, he is eager at once to rectify it, and would say, "Father, do not read my conduct severely. I love you with all my heart. I may have erred; I have erred; I beg to express my deep regret and repentance." He could not bear it that his father should think, "My child has no esteem for me, no respect for me, no love for me." It ought to go hard with every Christian when he thinks he has given God cause to doubt his love. I should suspect he has, when he finds cause to suspect it himself. When you say in your soul, "Do I love the Lord or not?"—just think whether God may not be saying it—whether Jesus Christ, the ever blessed, may not feel cause next time he meets you to say to you, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? *Indeed*, dost thou love me?" Three times he may have to put that question, because you have given him a treble cause for mistrusting you, as to whether, indeed, your heart is right before him. We know that the Lord knows all things, and he knows that we love him. We fall back on that, but still we would not so act that the action should look as if we did not. We do not want so to think, or speak, or do, that anything about us should give just cause for suspicion to the All-wise One as to the reality of our professions of love.

Fear, then—this blessed fear—is what we must all cultivate, and the Lord grant that we may have it, fully matured and fitly exercised, for "blessed is the man that feareth always."

II. But, now, giving our meditation a more cheerful turn, let us follow the teaching of our text. It says that this fear has strong confidence in it. **WHEREIN IS THAT CONFIDENCE SEEN?** The history of men that have feared God may perhaps enlighten us a little on this matter. It is written concerning Job that he was a man that "feared God and eschewed evil." Satan was permitted to tempt him, and he came into deep trouble, but how blessed was the confidence of Job in all his trouble. How brave a thing it was to say, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" How grand it was of him to say in answer to his wife, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" Best of all, that was one of the noblest resolves that ever mortal uttered, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." A man up to his neck in trouble—nay, with the billows going over him, and yet his confidence in God is not moved—nay, not for a single moment. He declares that, if God does not set him right now while he lives, yet he believes that his God, his kinsman, lives, and that, if he dies, yet after his death God would avenge him. "I know," says he, "that my avenger liveth, and though after my death the worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, and I shall get right somehow." He feels sure about that, so his confidence is strong, and it relaxes not in time of trouble. You see

the like implicit confidence in Habakkuk. He draws a dreadful picture—"Though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall." He foresees the full stress of the calamity, and prophecies that it *shall* come to pass. "Yet," saith he, "will I rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation." That was the simple consequence of his fear of the Lord. He feared, and therefore trusted. He knew the grandeur of the divine character. He trembled to impute wrong or unfaithfulness to God; he feared him too much to have one hard thought of him, or to utter one mistrustful word about him; so in the grandeur of that fear he felt a strong confidence. Both Job and Habakkuk experienced and even tested this, and many there be schooled in the same school who have spoken after the same valiant fashion when all God's waves and billows have gone over them.

That confidence will not only appear in time of trouble, but it will appear in acts of obedience. The Lord calls his people to obey him, and sometimes obedience requires great self-denial. We may have to surrender what we greatly prize for Christ's sake. It is not always easy to be confident in doing that which demands quick decision. We may be prone to parley or to do as though we were driven, yielding to stern compulsion rather than surrendering with sweet submission. But to do it with strong confidence can only come to us from having the fear of God before us. Now, Abraham feared the Lord with all his heart, and when the Lord said, "Take now thy son, thy only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him up for a burnt offering upon a mountain which I will tell thee of"—if he had not feared God wonderfully, and dreaded to do anything that would look like rebellion against his orders, he would have said, "What! commit murder—for it will come to that—slay my own dear child!" But no, though he could not understand it, he felt sure that God had some meaning in it—that God could not be ordering him to do what was wrong—that there must be a way by which it would be made right. Besides, he remembered that in Isaac was his seed to be called, and his descendants were to come out of Isaac. How, then, can God keep his promise? How can he fulfil the covenant? This also did not distress Abraham, but being "strong in faith, he staggered not through unbelief." Hence he rose up early in the morning and prepared the wood. I have looked with tears at the spectacle of that old man, far advanced in years, preparing the wood, and then getting up early and putting the wood upon Isaac, and then going with him, and telling the servants at the bottom of the hill that they must stay lest they should interrupt the consummation of that wondrous deed of faith. And then Isaac says to him, "My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" It must have brought the heart of the father into his mouth. Still he seemed to swallow that dreadful thought, and he said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." And so he takes him and lays him on the altar, and draws a knife—going through with it—right through with it, to the very last, with wondrous heroism; till the Lord stayed his hand. But for his deep fear of God he never would have had the confidence to go through with such an act of obedience.

Although the Lord does not call you and me to such strong tests as

that, yet he does try our faith. I have known sometimes when a man in order to do his duty has had before him what appeared to be a terrible dilemma—"I shall have to give up that situation. If I do that, what is to become of my children? Were I a single man I would do it without hesitation. I would face poverty; I would go down to the docks to ask for day labour. But there are the *children*. The children—what is to become of the children?" You see you cannot feel like Abraham, who gave up the darling child for God. You are staggered. Yes, but if your fear of God is very strong, you will say, "I cannot make a compromise with any sin. I cannot persevere with that sinful line of business in which I am engaged. Is this the ultimatum? then it admits of no alternative. If God should leave me and my little children to starve, yet I must cede all into God's hands. It is his to provide, not mine. He does not allow me to do a wrong thing under any circumstances. So here goes for God and for righteousness." If you have got a great fear of God, that is what you will do, but if you have not the reverence you will not have the confidence. For lack thereof you will timorously shrink back into the sin which galls you. May God give you the heroic confidence which springs of a deep fear of him.

The same confidence, the same loyalty to God will develop itself when persecution is involved. There are in this world men who hate true religion, and the experiences which occur to true believers are consequently often very painful. If we have much fear of God, we shall have strong confidence, but if we have not the fear of God, then the fear of man will make us waver. See yonder; Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold on the plains of Dura. A great many people stand about the colossal figure who are of the race of Shem, monotheists—that is to say, believers in one God; not polytheists, whose creed might excuse their idolatry. Hark now! At the sound of flute, harp, sackbut and all kinds of music, the herald proclaims that whosoever will not bow down and worship the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. How quickly does this recreant race of Protestant people swallow their principles. See how they succumb, with their heads in the dust, worshipping the golden image. They had not much fear of the one God, and so they break all his laws. They have more fear of Nebuchadnezzar and his furnace than they have of Jehovah the God of Israel. But here are three young men, captives in Babylon, who stand before the king, and when asked why it is that they have not worshipped his gods and the image which he has set up, declare that they will not worship his god or fall down before his image. They speak positively. They say, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, but, if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not worship thy gods or the image which thou hast set up." Look at the king's fury. See how the devil lights up his face with lurid glare, how a legion of devils possesses him. "Heat that furnace seven times hotter than its wont," says he, "and cast these daring rebels therein." The men are calm, unruffled by his rage, unmoved by his threats. They do not even take off their hats to him. There they stand, in their hosen, and their hats, calm and quiet. They defy the king, because who need have a fear of Nebuchadnezzar that has a fear of Jehovah? Who need fear a king that fears the King of kings? So they consent

to be put into the furnace, for in the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence. It was bravely done by old Hugh Latimer when he preached before Harry the Eighth. It was the custom of the Court preacher to present the king with something on his birthday, and Latimer presented Henry VIII. with a pocket-handkerchief with this text in the corner, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"; a very suitable text for bluff Harry. And then he preached a sermon before his most gracious majesty against sins of lust, and he delivered himself with tremendous force, not forgetting or abridging the personal application. And the king said that next time Latimer preached—the next Sunday—he should apologise, and he would make him so mould his sermon as to eat his own words. Latimer thanked the king for letting him off so easily. When the next Sunday came, he stood up in the pulpit and said: "Hugh Latimer, thou art this day to preach before the high and mighty prince Henry, King of Great Britain and France. If thou sayest one single word that displeases his Majesty he will take thy head off; therefore, mind what thou art at." But then said he, "Hugh Latimer, thou art this day to preach before the Lord God Almighty, who is able to cast both body and soul into hell, and so tell the king the truth outright." And so he did. His performance was equal to his resolution. However, the king did not take off his head, he respected him all the more. The fear of the Lord gave him strong confidence, as it will any who cleave close to their colours.

"Fear him, ye saints, and ye will then
Have nothing else to fear."

Drive right straight ahead in the fear of the everlasting God, and whoever comes in your way had better mind what he is at. It is yours to do what is right, and bear everything they devise that is wrong. God will bless you therein, and you shall praise him therefore.

Moreover, this fear of God declares itself in other things besides braving trouble and enduring. It will be a tower of strength to you when you stand up to bear witness to the truth. Have you anything to say for Jesus, you will say it in a very cowardly and sneaking manner if you have not a great fear of God; but if you fear God much, you will be like Peter and John, of whom when the council saw them it is said, "they wondered at their boldness." The fear of God will make you bold in speaking God's word.

Or should you fall down in sheer exhaustion, instead of standing up in sound enthusiasm, the fear of God will prove a potent restorative. Even if you are overthrown for a time you shall overcome at the last. In the Book of Micah we read, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall, yet shall I rise again." He that truly fears God expects to conquer, even though for a time he seems to be defeated. This fear will come out gloriously in confidence in the hour of death. If we fear God we shall, like Stephen, fall asleep, even if it be amid a shower of stones. Glorious is the confidence with which Christians depart from this life when they can depend on the God whom they fear with reverence and serve with readiness.

III. I must hasten on to notice, in the third place, though not to

dwelt upon it as I could wish, **WHEREUPON THIS CONFIDENCE IS BUILT.** The fear of the Lord brings strong confidence, but why?

Why; because they that fear God know God to be infinitely loving to them, to be immutable and unchangeable, to be unsearchably wise, and omnipotently strong on their behalf. How can they help having confidence in such a God? They know, next, that a full atonement has been made for their sins. Jesus has borne the wrath of God for them: how can they help being confident? They know that this same Jesus has risen from the dead and lives to plead for them, and in their ears they can hear the almighty plea of Jesus ever speaking in their favour. How can they help having confidence? They believe that this same Jesus is head over all things to his church, and ruler of providence. How can they help being confident in him? To him all power is given in heaven and in earth. They believe that everything is working together for their good. How can they help being confident, I say again? They believe that the Spirit of God is in them, dwells in them. What confidence can be too staunch and steadfast for men who know this to be true? They know that there is a mysterious union between them and the Son of God; that they are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. What confidence can be too implicit? They know that there are two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie—his promise and his oath, whereby he has given them strong consolation. With such strong consolation they may well have strong confidence.

“The gospel bears my spirits up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation of my hope
In oaths and promises and blood.”

Oh, what unwavering confidence may be based on this firm foundation which God has laid for his people. But time fails me; I cannot enlarge upon it.

IV. Let me therefore close with a fourth reflection, **HOW THIS CONFIDENCE AND THIS FEAR ARE FAVOURED OF GOD!** Observe the promise. “His children shall have a place of refuge.” So, then, you see that those who fear God, and have confidence in him, are his children. They have a childlike fear, and then they have a childlike confidence, and these are the marks that they are his children. And what a favour is this! “To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.” Oh, dear friends, there is a heaven lying asleep inside those words—*his children*. There is paradise eternal couched within that word—*Abba, Father*. If you know how to say it with the spirit of adoption, you have the earnest of the inheritance within you: you have got a heaven, a young heaven within your spirit. Oh, be glad! To be a child of God is greater than to be an angel. Why, were Gabriel capable of envy, he would envy you who are the children of the Most High, however poor or sick or downcast you may be. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.”

“His children shall have a place of refuge.” Take heart, for this is a grand thought, for you that fear him and confide in him; you shall have a place of refuge. There is Noah. All the world is about to

be drowned. In vain might one climb to the tops of the mountains, for the waters will cover their highest pinnacle. Must Noah be drowned, then? Is his destruction inevitable? No, but there is an ark for him. God will not pull up the flood-gates of heaven till Noah is shut in the ark. There is Lot—naughty Lot. He has been acting very badly, and he has got away there down in Sodom. Still, he is a child of God, and he is vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, proving that he has some fear of God in his heart. Well, what does the Lord say? "Haste thee," he says, "for I cannot do anything till thou hast come out hither." Lot must get to Zoar. There must be a little city to shelter Lot. God cannot burn Sodom and Gomorrah till he has got Lot safe out of the way. He must find a refuge for his children. Well, there are his people down in Egypt. God is going to smite the firstborn, and he has loosed an angel to do it, and that angel is swift in his message—swift to do his bidding, and he will slay the firstborn of Israel as well as of Egypt when he goes upon his terrible errand. He will make no distinctions. Yes, but there are the blood-marks over the door, and the angel sees that the bloody sacrifice has been offered in that house, and he passes by. God's people must have a place of refuge, and he found them one in Egypt when the angel was let loose, and the angel of death was there. So it happened all along through Scripture history. God sent a famine into the land, and after the famine some that had fled the country came back, and, among the rest, Naomi and Ruth. What is to become of Ruth? She has been a heathen. She has come to fear God. She has put her trust under the shadow of the Almighty's wings. What is to become of Ruth? Well, she must go and glean in the fields of him who is next of kin, and she found a place of refuge in his bosom. God takes care, you see, of those that fear him and have confidence in him. But there is another great famine, and all the country is barren for three years long. According to the word of God, there is neither dew nor rain, and there is no food, but there is one man there who fears the Lord above all the rest, and that is Elijah. Well, he must have a place of refuge. There, you see, by the brook Cherith he sits him down, and ravens, that were more likely to rob him than to feed him, come to bring him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening. I heard some time ago of a poor woman who was very hard pressed for food; but she remembered the promise of God, and she knelt down and appealed to him that he would provide her bread. Just afterwards a friend came in who brought a loaf of bread to her, saying that this loaf of bread was bought for her husband, but her husband was not well, and he was unable to eat it because they found that a mouse had been eating it, and it so turned him that he could not eat the bread. But the loaf was not hurt: "and," said the friend, "I dare say you will eat it; I have cut away the part that the mouse touched." Oh, yes, God can make a mouse do it, or a raven do it. His people shall have a place of refuge. When the brooks are dried up, and the ravens are gone, there is a widow woman over there who has to sustain Elijah, and that woman's cruse is nearly empty, and her barrel of meal nearly all spent; but, still, her house is the place of refuge for Elijah, and God provides for him there. When the Lord Jesus was here he knew that Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and he

knew that his disciples were to be there with the Jews; but if history is to be believed—and I suppose it is—no Christians perished in the destruction of Jerusalem; yet they were very numerous. There is no mention of them by Josephus. They were all gone away, many of them to the little city called Pella, and other places beyond the river Jordan, because Jesus told them, when they saw Jerusalem compassed with armies, they might know that the desolation thereof was nigh. So he counselled such as were in Judea to flee to the mountains. Thus when that destruction came, which was the most terrible calamity that ever happened on the face of the earth, his people had a place of refuge. And now, brethren, whatever is going to happen—and there are some that predict dreadful things—as for me, I do not know what is going to happen, and, which is another thing, I do not care—his people shall have a place of refuge. “Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swellings thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” If it should ever come to this—that the whole earth should rock and reel, or burn and smoke and seethe, or burn, like a cauldron, into one boiling mass—if there is no room for God’s people on the earth to find a refuge, he will find a refuge for them in the clouds. They shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. But, somehow or other, his people shall have a place of refuge. *His children shall have a place of refuge.* Lay hold on that. There is a refuge for you somewhere, Christian, even in the matter of ordinary providence, and there is always a mercy-seat for you to go to. There is always the bosom of Christ for you to fly to. The fear of the Lord does not drive you from him. It drives you to him, and when it drives you to him you have got a place of refuge. I find that Moses Stewart reads the text differently from anybody else, and I am not sure that he is wrong. He says the text means that the children of those that fear God shall have a place of refuge, and, if so, this is not the only passage of Scripture that proves it. There are many precious texts that speak of our children. Let us try to grasp the promise for our children as well as for ourselves, and pray for them that they may have a place of refuge. There are some believers going to be baptized to-night. I hope they have got a firm grip of that gospel promise that Paul uttered, where he says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” The jailer did, you know, and we find that it is said, “He was baptized, and all his house;” and for this reason—that he believed in the Lord, rejoicing with all his house. Oh, we can never be satisfied till we see all our house converted, and all our household baptized, and all those that belong to us belonging also to the Lord our God, for thus it is “His children shall have a place of refuge.” May God bless you, dear friends, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxxvii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BEST BURDEN FOR YOUNG SHOULDERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."—Lamentations iii. 27.

YOKE-BEARING is not pleasant, but it is good. It is not every pleasant thing that is good, nor every good thing that is pleasant. Sometimes the goodness may be just in proportion to the unpleasantness. Now, it is childish to be always craving for sweets; those who by reason of use have had their senses exercised, should prefer the wholesome to the palatable. It ought to reconcile us to that which is unsavoury when we are informed that it is good! A little child is not easily reconciled that way, because, as yet, he cannot think and judge; but the man of God ought to find it very easy to quiet every murmur and complaint as soon as he perceives that, though unpleasant, the thing is good. Since, my dear friends, we are not very good judges ourselves of that which is good for us, any more than our children are, and since we expect our little ones to leave the choice of their diet with us, will it not be wise of us to leave everything with our heavenly Father? We can judge what is pleasant, but we cannot discern that which is good for us, but HE can judge, and therefore it will be always well for us to leave all our affairs in his hands, and say, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Since we are quite certain upon Scriptural authority that whatever the Lord sends to his people will work out their benefit, we ought to be perfectly resigned to the Lord's will; nay, much more, we ought to be thankful for all his appointments even when they displease the flesh, being quite certain that his will is the best that can be, and that if we could see the end from the beginning it is exactly what we should choose, if we were as wise and good as our heavenly Father is. Our shoulders bow themselves with gladness to the burden which Jesus declares to be profitable unto us: this assurance from his lips makes his yoke easy to bear.

Our text tells us of something which, though not very comfortable, is good.—"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." The No. 1,291.

illustration is drawn from cattle. The bullocks have to bear the yoke. They go in pairs, and the yoke is borne upon their shoulders. The yoke is somewhat burdensome. If the bullock is not broken-in when it is young it will never make a good ploughing ox. It will be fretted and troubled with the labour it will have to do; it will be very hard work to drive it, and the husbandman will accomplish but little ploughing. It is good for the bullock to be brought into subjection while it is young, and so it is with all sorts of animals: the horse must be broken-in while he is a colt; and if a certain period of that horse's life be allowed to pass over without its being under the trainer's hand, it will never make a thoroughly useful horse. If you want to train a dog you must take him while he is young, and teach him his work. That is the metaphor. It is just so with men. It is good for us that we be broken-in while we are yet young, and learn to bear the yoke in our youth.

If you take the text naturally as uttering a truth of ordinary life, it is still worth considering. Even apart from the grace of God, and apart from religion, it is a great blessing for a man to bear the yoke in his youth! that is to say, first, *it is good for us when we are young to learn obedience*. It is half the making of a man to be placed under rule, and taught to bear restraint. When young people grow older they will have to be very much a law unto themselves, there may be no father living to warn them lovingly, and no mother to guide them gently; young people will be older people, and govern themselves, and no one is fit to do that till he has learned to be obedient. The proverb is, "Boys will be boys," but I do not think so,—they will be men if we let them have time, and unless they learn self-restraint and habits of obedience while they are boys, they are not likely to make good men. He who cannot obey is not fit to rule: he who never learned to submit will make a tyrant when he obtains the power. It is good that every child should be broken in, delivered from his foolish self-will, and made to feel that he has superiors, masters, and governors, and, then, when it shall come to his turn to be a leader and a master he will have the more kindly fellow-feeling to those who are under him. Be you sure of this, that if he does not learn the drill of obedience he will never be a good soldier in the battle of life.

It is good for young people to bear the yoke, too, in the sense of giving themselves in their early days to acquire knowledge. If we do not learn when we are young, when shall we learn? Some who have begun to study late in life, have yet achieved a good deal, but it has been with much difficulty. If you do not use the machinery of the mind in youth, it gets rusty; but if it is used from the very first, and kept continually in action and well oiled, it will go on easily throughout the whole of life. Our early days are favourable to the acquirement of knowledge, and every lad that is an apprentice should make the best of his apprenticeship: he will never make much of a journeyman if he does not. Every man that is starting in life, while he is yet young should do all that he possibly can to acquire a full equipment, for if he does not he will know the miss of it sooner or later. If a man starts upon life's voyage and has left his anchor at home, or forgotten his stores, he will find out his deficiencies when he gets to sea; and when the storm begins to howl

through the cordage he will wish that he had listened to the dictates of prudence, and had been better prepared for life's perilous voyage.

It is good for young people, too—we are now talking about the natural meaning of the passage—*good for them that they should encounter difficulties and troubles when they begin life*. The silver spoon in the mouth with which some people are born is very apt to choke them. There are hundreds of people who have never been able to speak out because of that dreadful silver spoon. It is not every man that is the richer in the long run, even in mere gold and silver, for having commenced with capital. I believe you will generally find that the rich men who have been "self-made," as they call it, came to London with a half-crown in their pockets; I have noticed that thirty pence is about the amount they leave home with; and that half-crown, neither less nor more, becomes the nest egg of a fortune. Young men who begin with thousands of pounds often end with nothing at all. It is good for a man that he should have a rough battle when life begins, that he should not be lapped in dainty ease, and find everything arranged according to his will: he will never develop his muscle, he will never make a man, unless there is hard work for him to do. Those long hours, that stern thinking, those weary bones, and all that, of which young people now-a-days are very apt to complain, though they do not work half as hard as their fathers, nor above a tenth as hard as their grandfathers—all these things within reason and measure help to make men, and I only hope that the easier times, which are now happily in fashion, may not breed a softer and a less manly nature among our young men. It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke of labour, trial, and difficulty in his youth, and if we could lift the yoke from every weary shoulder it would not be wise to do so. Many a man who has succeeded in life is very thankful to God that he had in his early years to bear a little poverty, and to work hard and toil, for he never would have come to be what he is if it had not been for the strengthening and educating influence of trial.

It is not, however, my business to preach about these matters at any length; I am not a moral lecturer, but a minister of the gospel. I have fulfilled a duty when I have given the first meaning to the text, and now I shall use it for nobler ends.

I. First of all, IT IS GOOD TO BE A CHRISTIAN WHILE YOU ARE YOUNG. It is good for a man to bear Christ's yoke in his youth.

I shall not ask you to pardon me if I here speak as one who has tried and proved it. Surely I may do so without egotism, for it is not mine own honour, but God's, that I shall speak of. What the Lord has wrought in me, of that I will speak. At fifteen years of age I was brought to know the Lord, and to confess him, and I can therefore speak as one who bore the yoke in his youth; and, young people, if I have never to address you again, I should like to say to you, it has been good for me. Ah, how good I cannot tell you, but so good that I earnestly wish that every one of you would bear my Master's yoke in his youth: I could not wish you a greater blessing.

For, see, first, the man whose heart is conquered by divine grace early *is made happy soon*. That is a blessed prayer in the psalm, "O satisfy us *early* with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

Very few people, if they understood it, would wish to postpone happiness. Young hearts generally ask to be happy *now*. To have sin forgiven is to be unloaded *now* of that which is the prime cause of sorrow. To receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith is to be clothed with peace *now*. To be reconciled to God is to have a spring of consolation within your soul *now*. To know yourself to be God's child is to have the greatest joy out of heaven, and to have it *now*. Who would wish to postpone it? Young Christians may die, but it is of small consequence if they do, for being early in Christ, they will be early in heaven. Who would not wish to be safe as soon as possible? Who desires to tarry in the land of peril, where a point of time, a moment's space, may shut you up in hell? To be early secured from the wrath to come—early endued with a sense of security in Jesus Christ—why surely it does not want many words to prove that this is good!

Besides, while early piety brings early happiness, let it never be forgotten that *it saves from a thousand snares*. There are things which a man knows, who has lived long in sin, which he wishes he could forget! God's grace rinses your mouth after you have been eating the forbidden fruit, but the flavour is very apt to linger, and to return. Songs which are libels upon God and upon decency, once heard, will attack you in the middle of a prayer; and words which, if you could forget them, you might be willing to lose your memory for that purpose, will invade your most hallowed seasons. It is a great mercy that if a man be seventy or eighty years of age, yet if he shall believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be saved! Eleventh hour mercies are very sweet. But what a double privilege it is to be set to work in the vineyard while yet the dew is on the leaves, and so to be kept from the idleness and the wickedness of the market place in which others loiter so long.

It is good for a man to bear Christ's yoke in his youth because *it saves him from having those shoulders galled with the devil's yoke*. It preserves him from the fetters of that pitiful slavery into which so many are brought by habits long acquired and deeply seated. Sins long indulged grow to the shoulders, and to remove them is like tearing away one's flesh. Be thankful, young people, that the Saviour is ready to receive you while you are yet young, and that he gives you the promise, "They that seek me early shall find me." Happy they who entertain the Redeemer in the morning, and so shut out the evil spirit all day long.

There is this goodness about it, again, that *it gives you longer time in which to serve God*. If I were taken into the service of one whom I loved, I should like to do him a long day's work. If I knew that I could only work for him one day, I should strive to begin as soon as the grey light of dawn permitted me to see, and I would continue at work far into the evening, cheerfully active, so long as a glimmer remained. If you are converted late in life you can only give to our Lord Jesus the shades of evening. Blessed be his name, he will accept eventide service; but still, how much better to be able to serve the Lord from your youth up, to give him those bright days while the birds are singing in the soul, when the sun is unclouded, and the shadows are not falling; and then to give him the long evening, when at eventide he makes it light, and causes the infirmities of age to play his power and his fidelity. I think I know of no grander sight

than that of a grey-haired man who has served the Lord Jesus from his youth up.

There is this goodness about it yet further, that *it enables one to be well established in divine things*. "They that are planted in the courts of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." A tree transplanted takes a certain time to root, but when it becomes well established it produces abundant fruit. There must be time for striking root in divine things; everything in the kingdom of grace is not to be learned in ten minutes. I bless God that a man who has believed in Jesus only one second is a saved man; but he is not an instructed man, he is not an established man. He is not trained for battle; nor tutored for labour. These things take time. When we are converted we go to school to Christ, we sit at his feet and learn of him. Now, who is the best scholar? All other things being equal, I should expect to find the best scholars in the school to be those who come early. Eleven o'clock scholars do not learn much; evening scholars, with a good master and great diligence, may pick up something, but scarcely so much as those who have been at the school all day. Oh, how blessed it is to begin to know Christ very early, because then you can go on comprehending with all saints the heights and depths of that which surpasseth knowledge. No fear that you will ever exhaust this knowledge; it is so infinitely great and blessed, that if we lived seven thousand years in the world, there would still be more to know of Christ, and we should still have to say, "Oh, the depths." We need not be afraid, therefore, that if we are converted when we are ten, or fifteen, or twenty years of age, we shall live to wear out the freshness of religion. Ah, no, we shall love it more and understand it better, and by God's grace practice it more fully as the years roll over us. Hence it is so good to begin soon.

And then, let me say, *it gives such confidence in after life to have given your heart to Jesus young*.

I am glad to see some boys and girls here to-night. Now, my dear children, God may spare you to become old men and old women, and when your hair is grey and you are getting feeble, and you know that you will soon die, it will be very delightful to be able to say, "O Lord, I have known thee from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not." There will be much force in the plea, for if we have a faithful servant, we do not cast him off when he grows old. "Ah," you say, "he cannot do much now. The old man is getting very feeble, he cannot see or hear as he used to do, and he is slow in his movements: but, then, you see, the good old fellow has been in our family ever since he was a boy, and you do not think we are going to turn him off now?" No, the Lord will not cast off his old servants. He will not say to them "I have had the best of you; I have had your young days, and I have had your middle life, but now you may go begging, and take care of yourself." No, that is how the Amalekite or the Ishmaelite might talk, but the God of Israel never forsakes his people. He says, "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made; and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." O, you who have given yourselves to Jesus through his rich and sovereign grace while you are young, I know

you feel it a sweet plea to urge with God—"Now, Lord, forsake me not." So, then, young people, if you would lay by a precious treasure of consolation when those that look out of the windows are darkened, if you would have strength for the time of weakness, if you would have comfort for the day when the mourners go about the streets, if, above all, you would be supported when you are going to your long home, yield yourselves to Jesus now. Oh, that this very night you may bow your shoulders to the easy yoke of the meek and lowly Saviour; so shall you find rest unto your souls.

II. I shall now give another meaning to the text; may the Holy Spirit bless it. Secondly, IT IS GOOD FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS THAT THEY BEAR THE YOKE OF JESUS. What do we mean by that?

A good number of you have been lately converted, and to you I speak most earnestly. It will be for your good as long as ever you live to render to Jesus *complete obedience at the very first*. Some Christians seem to me to start to Canaan all in a muddle; they do not begin their pilgrimage in the right pilgrim fashion. Every young Christian when he is converted should take time to consider, and should say to himself, "What am I to do? What is the duty of a Christian?" He should also devoutly say to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, show me what thou wouldst have me to do," and wait upon the Holy Ghost for guidance.

Two young lads were not long ago converted to God; one of them attended here, the other at another place of worship. They talked to each other about what was the right way of confessing Jesus Christ: they did not quite know, but they meant to find out. They borrowed the keys of a neighbouring Independent chapel, and went inside and spent some hours day after day reading together the New Testament, and turning to every passage which refers to baptism. The result was that they both of them came and were baptized in this place. I wish that all Christians in commencing would look at that ordinance, and at every other point in dispute, and see what is God's mind about it. Search the Scriptures and see for yourselves. Do not say, "I have always been with the Episcopalians, and therefore I ought to do as they do at church." Or "I have always been with the Baptists," or "with the Wesleyans." My dear friends, these people cannot make rules for us. Here is our guide—this Bible. If I want to go by the railway, I use Bradshaw, and do not trust to hearsay; and if I want to go to heaven I must follow the Bible. There is another book which people will ask you to attend to. Well, we will say nothing against that book, only it is not *the* book. *The* book is this volume, the blessed Bible. You should begin by feeling, "My Lord has saved me; I am his servant, and I mean at once to take his yoke upon me. I will, as far as ever I can, do what he would have me do. There are some sins into which I shall most likely fall. Watch as I may, I shall sometimes make a slip, but here are some things which I can be right about, and I will take care that I am right about them." Now, if you young people begin conscientiously studying the word, and desiring in everything to put your feet down where Christ put his feet, I am sure it will be good for you. You will grow up to be healthy Christians, and men of no ordinary stature. But if you do not begin with searching the word, but take your religion at second-hand from other people, and do what

you see other people do, without searching, why, you will lack that noble independence of mind and courage of spirit, and, at the same time, that complete submission to Christ, which make up the main elements of a noble-minded Christian.

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth, in the next place, namely, by *attaining clear instruction in divine truth*. We ought to go to the Lord Jesus Christ to learn of him, not merely about ordinances and actions, but about what to think and what to believe. Oh, how I wish that every one of us had begun, with regard to our doctrinal sentiments, by presenting our minds to Christ like a sheet of clear paper for his Holy Spirit to write the truth thereon. Alas, we begin with many a line upon us written by the pen of prejudice. Dear friend, if you are converted to God, you are now to sit at the feet of Jesus, to learn everything from him—not to take your views to him. Those are common expressions, “my views,” and “my opinions,” and “I am of such a persuasion.” Beloved, be persuaded by Christ, for that is the only persuasion worth following. Take your *views* from him : no other views of eternal and heavenly things are worth having. “Oh,” says one, “but then they might not happen to be *your* views.” Just so, and I do not ask you to take my views ; on the other hand I charge you before God never to believe anything because I say it, but to hearken only to my Master, and yield your faith only to the infallible book. We urge this upon you because, even if you believe the truth because we say it, you have not believed it in the right way. Truth is to be received because it is *true*, and because Jesus Christ’s authority proves it *to you* to be true, not because any poor mortal who happens to preach is supposed to possess authority to decide such questions. We have no authority to assert anything to be truth upon our own *ipse dixit*. We are simply the trumpets at the lips of Christ when we speak with power ; and sometimes, alas, we blow our own trumpets instead of leaving Jesus Christ to blow through us, and then we are worse than useless. I charge you bear the yoke in your youth by studying hard to know what is the way, and the truth, and the life, from the lips of Jesus Christ himself, being taught of the Spirit of God. It is good for you to do this.

It is good for young converts also to bear the yoke by beginning to serve Jesus Christ early. I like to see the mother when she brings her little one to the house of God put the penny into its hand, and teach it early to contribute to the cause of Christ ; and when people are converted there is nothing like their having something to do very soon. Not that they are to attempt to do the major things which belong to the more advanced and instructed ; for, concerning some of these, we should apply the rule, “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.” But there is work for every believer to do in Christ’s vineyard. There is work for children, there is work for young men, work for young women, and it is good to begin early. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was so pleased with the widow’s mite, is very pleased with a child’s love to him. We big people are very apt to think, “What can a little girl do for Jesus ?” Oh, but if that little girl does not do something for Jesus now that she is saved, she will very likely grow up to be an idle Christian, and not serve God in after years as she should.

I like to see the little trees which they put into our gardens, you know, the little pyramids, and other dwarf trees ; I like to see them even from the first bear just a little fruit. I think, sometimes, that pears, when there are only one or two on the tree, are far finer in flavour than those on the big tree, which too often have lost in quality what they have gained in quantity. That which is done for Jesus Christ by young Christians, by weak Christians, by timid Christians, often has a very delicate flavour about it, precious to the taste of Jesus. It is good to begin serving him in our youth.

"Ah," says one, "I shall begin when I can preach." Will you? You had better begin writing a letter to that young friend with whom you went to school. You had better begin by dropping a tract down an area, or by trying to speak to some young person of your own age. Pride will prompt you to wish to be great, but love to Jesus will teach you that the small things are acceptable with him. It is good for young men—good for young women—that as soon as they are converted to God they should bear the yoke of service.

It is also good that when we begin to serve God we should bear the yoke in another sense, namely, *by finding difficulties*. If it were in my power to make the way of serving Christ very easy to every young Christian here, I would not do it. If it were possible to make all Sunday-school work pleasant, I would not do it. If it were possible to make standing up in the open air to preach a very easy thing, I would not make it so. It is good for you that you bear the yoke. It is good that your service should involve self-denial, and try your patience. It is good for you that the girls should not be very orderly, and that the boys should not be very teachable when you get them in the class. It is good for you that the crowd should not stand still and listen very meekly to you, and that infidels should put ugly questions to you when you are preaching in the street. It is good, I know, for the young minister to encounter curious church members, and even to meet with an adversary who means to overthrow him. It is a good thing for a true worker for the devil to labour to put him down, because if God has put him up, he cannot be put down, but the attempt to overthrow him will do him good, develop his spiritual muscle, and bring out the powers of his mind. A very easy path would not be profitable to us. Consider David after Samuel had put the oil on his head, and anointed him to be the future king of Judah ; it would have been a very bad thing for him to have waited in inglorious ease and slumbered away the interval. But take David and send him into the wilderness to keep the sheep : bring him to Saul's court, and let Saul throw a javelin at him : send him to fight with Goliath : banish him afterwards to the tracks of the wild goats, and compel him to live in the dens and in the caves and make him fight for his life, and by this process you will educate a hero, fit to rule Israel. He comes to the throne no longer a youth and ruddy, but a man of war from his youth up, and he is, therefore, ready to smite the Philistines or the children of Ammon as the champion of the Lord of Hosts. It is good, then, to bear the yoke in the sense of undertaking service for Jesus and finding difficulty in it.

And it is good yet further. *It is good to meet with persecution in your youth.* If it were possible to take every young Christian and put

him into a pious family and not let him go into the world at all, but always keep him in his mother's lap—if it were possible to take every working man and guarantee that he should only work in a shop where they sing psalms from morning to night, where nobody ever swears, where nobody ever utters a word of chaff against him—why, I say, if it were possible to do this, I do not know that it would be wise to do it. To keep people out of temptation is exceedingly proper, and none of us have any right to put a temptation in another's way; but it is good for us to be tempted sometimes, otherwise we should not know the real condition of our hearts, and might be rotting with inward pride while blooming with outward morality. Temptation lets us know how weak we are, and drives us to our knees. It tests our faith and tries our love, and lets us see whether our graces are genuine or not. When religion puts on her silver slippers and walks out with her golden earrings, everybody is quite content to go with her, but the honest, hearty Christian will follow Jesus Christ's truth when she goes barefoot through the mire and through the slough, and when her garments are bespattered by unholy hands. Herein is the trial of the true, and the unmasking of the deceitful. It would not be good for us to be kept from persecution, and slander, and trial; it is good for a man that he bear this yoke in his youth. A Christian is a hardy plant. Many years ago a larch was brought to England. The gentleman who brought it put it in his hothouse, but it did not develop in a healthy manner. It was a spindly thing, and therefore the gardener, feeling that he could not make anything of it, took it up and threw it out upon the dunghill. There it grew into a splendid tree, for it had found a temperature suitable to its nature. The tree was meant to grow near the snow; it loves cold winds and rough weather, and they had been sweating it to death in a hothouse. So it is with true Christianity. It seldom flourishes so well in the midst of ease and luxury as it does in great tribulation. Christians are often all the stronger and better because they happen to be cast where they have no Christian companions, or kindly encouragements. As liberty usually favours the hardy mountaineers whose rugged hills have made them brave and hardy, so does abounding grace, as a rule, visit those who endure the great fight of affliction, and through much tribulation inherit the kingdom.

Once more, I believe it is good for young Christians to *experience much soul-trouble*. My early days of thoughtfulness were days of bitterness. Before I found a Saviour I was ploughed with the great subsoil plough of terrible convictions. Month after month I sought but found no hope. I learned the plague of my heart, the desperate evil of my nature, and at this moment I have reason to thank God for that long wintry season. I am sure it was good to my soul. As a general rule there is a period of darkness somewhere or other in the Christian life: if you have it at first it is probable you will not endure it again; but if you do not have it at first it is just as likely you will pass through the cloud at some other time. It is well to have it over. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." Some friends seem to have found a patent way of going to heaven. If their way is the right one I am sure I am very much delighted, but I am rather dubious, for I meet with those who have tried the high-level railroad, and are greatly discouraged because the

train does not run so smoothly as they expected. They have been living a whole fortnight—well, not *quite* without sin—but very near it. They have triumphed and conquered altogether, and gone up in a balloon for a fortnight. Of course they have to come down again—and some come down with an awful fall. The best of them come, and say, “Dear pastor, I am afraid I am not a child of God. I feel so wretched, and yet I felt so happy and holy.” I have said, “Yes, you see you went up, and so you had to come down. If you had *kept* down you would not have had to *come* down.” That going up in a balloon to the stars frightens me about some young people; I wish they would continue humbly to feel that they are nothing and nobody, and that Christ is everything. It is much better on the whole that a man should be timid and trembling than that he should early in life become very confident. “Blessed is the man that feareth always” is a Scriptural text—not the slavish fear, nor yet a fear that doubts God, but still a fear. There is a deal of difference between doubting God and doubting yourself; you may have as much as you like of the last till you even get to self-despair, but there is no reason whatever why you should doubt the Lord. “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth,” to be made to feel the weight of sin, and the chastening hand of God, and to be left to cry out in the dark and say, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat.” These ordeals are of essential service to the newborn believer, and prepare him alike for the joys and the sorrows of his spiritual career.

III. I am going to finish with this last head. Practically, brothers and sisters, WE ARE ALL OF US IN OUR YOUTH. I see some grey heads and bald heads here, and yet they belong to persons in their minority. My dear brother, though you are seventy and more, yet you have not come of age yet in the heavenly kingdom; for if you were of age you would have your estates. None of us will come of age till we enter heaven. We are still under tutors and governors, because we are even now as little children. We have not come to that period in which we are fit for all the joys of heaven, for if we were we should be taken home to our Father’s house to enjoy our inheritance at once. We are still in our youth. Well, it is good for us at this present that we should bear the yoke, and continue still to bear it. It is good, my dear brother, that we who have gone some distance on the road to heaven should still have something to bear, because it enables us to honour Christ still. If we do not suffer with him, how can we have fellowship with him? If we have no crosses to carry, how can we commune with our Lord, the chief cross-bearer? Let us be glad that we are not spared tribulation, that we are not screened from affliction, but are permitted to glorify God by patience, by resignation, and by unstaggering faith. Do not ask the Lord that you may have no trouble, but rather remember you have only a little while in which you can be patient—only a little while in which you can be a cross-bearer, and therefore it behoves you to use each moment well. A few more revolving suns and you will be where there is no more cross to carry, no sorrow to bear, and, therefore, where there is no room for patience, and no opportunity of being acquiescent in the divine will. Be content to bear the yoke now, for it is but a little while, and this honour will be no longer yours.

It is good for us all to bear the yoke, too, because thus *old Adam is kept in check*. A wonderfully vivacious thing is that old Adam. He has been reported to be dead a good many times, but to my certain knowledge he is very brisk still. When we are in trouble, proud old Adam often seems to be quiet, and does not so well succeed in keeping us from prayer; and, consequently, in times of trouble, we often enjoy our very sweetest seasons of devotion. By the Lord's goodness we escape the trial, but, alas, old Adam soon lifts up his proud head again. He says, "Ah, you are a favourite of heaven, your mountain standeth firm. Your affliction has been sanctified to you, and you have grown in grace very wonderfully. The fact is, you are a very fine fellow." Yes, that is old Adam's way, and whenever he sees an opportunity he will return to his old game of flattery. Whenever you are tempted to be vain, say to yourself, "I know you, old Adam. I know you, and will not yield to your crafty devices." What happens when we become self-satisfied? Why, the yoke returns upon our shoulders heavily again. We fall into another trouble, and then old Adam is up in the stirrups again, and begins to grumble and rebel. The flesh begins proudly to despair, whereas a little while before it was boasting. Trials, in the hands of the Spirit, are a great help to overcome corruptions. It is a very hard matter for a man to be rich and prospering in this world, to be at ease and have a long stretch of health, and to have everything go exactly as he likes, and yet to be a Christian. When the road is very smooth many fall, but when the way is rough there is good grip for the feet, and we are not so likely to stumble. When trials come, they whip us home to our heavenly Father. Sheep do not stray so much when the black dog is after them; his barkings make them run to the shepherd. Affliction is the black dog of the Good Shepherd to fetch us back to him, otherwise we should wander to our ruin. We are not better than David; and we may honestly confess as he did, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Therefore it is good for us spiritually young people, even though old as to the flesh, that we should bear the yoke while we are still in our youth.

Besides, dear friends, it makes you so *helpful to others* to have known affliction. I do not see how we can sympathize if we are never tried ourselves. I know a beloved brother who is perhaps fifty years of age, who never had a day's sickness, and he told me he scarcely knew what physical pain was except when a heavy person tread on his toes. Well, now, he is a good brother; but when he tries to sympathize, it is like an elephant picking up a pin, or Hercules with a distaff; he does do it, but it is a thing to be wondered at. If you tell him that you feel very low in spirits, he looks at you and tries to say very kind things, but he does not understand your despondency. Now, it would be a great pity for a Christian minister to be lacking in the power to sympathize—would it not? Oh, thank God for troubles, because they make the heart tender, and they teach the lips the art of consolation. You can be a Boanerges without trouble, but you never can be a Barnabas; you may be a son of thunder, but you will never be a son of consolation. As we wish to serve others, let us thank God that he qualifies us to do so by making us bear the yoke in our youth.

Once more, is it not good to bear the yoke while we are here,

because *it will make heaven all the sweeter*? Oh, how sweet heaven will be to that bedridden woman, who has lain these twenty years upon her weary couch, and scarcely had a night's unbroken rest! What rest heaven will be to her! I know a good man within two miles of this place who has laid eighteen years without moving. I do not know a happier man than he is. It is a treat to see him; but still what a change it will be, from that bed from which he cannot rise, to stand on the sea of glass, and for ever wave the palm branch, and draw forth music from the celestial harp. What a transformation! How great the change for a poor Christian woman dying in a workhouse, to be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom! What a change for the martyr standing at the stake burning slowly to death, and then rising to behold the glory of his Lord! What a change for you, dear old friend, with all those aches and pains about you, which make you feel uneasy even while you are sitting here! Ah, greybeard, you will be young soon. There will be no wrinkles on your brow. You will not require those spectacles; you will not need that staff to lean upon; you will be as strong as the youngest there. As you stand before the throne of God you will scarcely know yourself to be the same old woman you used to be, or the same sickly man you were a little while ago. You will be stripped of the house of clay, and your young soul will leap up from the old body and be present with the Lord; and then the grave will be a fining pot in which the dross of the flesh will be consumed; and by-and-by your body will rise, no longer old and haggard and worn, but full of beauty, like your Master's glorious body. This should give joy to you at all times: it must be good for you to bear the yoke, seeing heaven will by that means be made more fully heaven to you when once you reach its everlasting rest.

"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long;
So let's smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Lamentations v.

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C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life ; and he that winneth souls is wise."—
Proverbs xi. 30.

I HAD very great joy last night—many of you know why, but some do not. We held our annual meeting of the church, and it was a very pleasant sight to see so many brethren and sisters knit together in the heartiest love, welded together as one mass by common sympathies, and holding firmly to "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." Think of a church with 4,900 members! Such a community has seldom been gathered in any age, and in the present century it is without a parallel. "O Lord, thou hast multiplied the people and increased the joy. They joy before thee as the joy of harvest." It brings tears into one's eyes to look upon so many who declare themselves to be members of the body of Christ. The hope that so many are plucked as brands from the burning and delivered from the wrath to come is in itself exceedingly consoling, and I felt the joy of it while communing with the brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus. On thinking it over afterwards, however, it seemed to me that there was a higher joy in looking at a body of believers than that which arises from merely regarding them as saved. Not but what there is a great joy in salvation, a joy worthy to stir the angelic harps. Think of the Saviour's agony in the ransom of every one of his redeemed, think of the work of the Holy Spirit in every renewed heart, think of the love of the Father as resting upon every one of the regenerate: I could not, if I took up my parable for a month, set forth all the mass of joy that is to be seen in a multitude of believers if we only look at what God has done *for* them, and promised *to* them, and will fulfil *in* them. But there is yet a wider field of thought, and my mind has been traversing it all this day—the thought of the capacities of service contained in a numerous band of believers, the possibilities of blessing others which lie within the bosoms of regenerate persons. We must not think so much of what we already are as to forget what the

Lord may accomplish by us for others. Here are the coals of fire, but who shall describe the conflagration which they may cause?

We ought to regard the Christian Church, not as a luxurious hostelry where Christian gentlemen may each one dwell at his ease in his own inn, but as a barracks in which soldiers are gathered together to be drilled and trained for war. We should regard the Christian church, not as an association for mutual admiration and comfort, but as an army with banners, marching to the fray, to achieve victories for Christ, to storm the strongholds of the foe, and to add province after province to the Redeemer's kingdom. We may view converted persons when gathered into church membership as so much wheat in the granary. God be thanked that it is there, and that so far the harvest has rewarded the sower; but far more soul-inspiring is the view when we regard those believers as each one likely to be made a living centre for the extension of the kingdom of Jesus, for then we see them sowing the fertile valleys of our land, and promising ere long to bring forth some thirty, some forty, some fifty, and some a hundredfold. The capacities of life are enormous, one becomes a thousand in a marvellously brief space. Within a short time a few grains of wheat would suffice to seed the whole world, and a few true saints might suffice for the conversion of all nations. Only take that which comes of one ear, store it well, sow it all, again store it next year, and then sow it all again, and the multiplication almost exceeds the power of computation. O that every Christian were thus year by year the Lord's seed corn! If all the wheat in the world had perished except a single grain, it would not take many years to replenish all the earth and sow her fields and plains; but in a far shorter time, in the power of the Holy Spirit, one Paul or one Peter would have evangelised all lands. View yourselves as grains of wheat predestinated to seed the world. That man lives grandly who is as earnest as if the very existence of Christianity depended upon himself, and is determined that to all men within his reach shall be made known the unsearchable riches of Christ.

If we whom Christ is pleased to use as his seed corn were only all scattered and sown as we ought to be, and were all to sprout and bring forth the green blade and the corn in the ear, what a harvest there would be! Again would it be fulfilled, "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains;"—a very bad position for it—"the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." May God grant us to feel to-night some degree of the Holy Spirit's quickening power while we talk together, not so much about what God has done *for* us as about what God may do *by* us, and how far we may put ourselves into a right position to be used by him.

There are two things in the text, and these are found laid out with much distinctness in its two sentences. The first is—*the life of the believer is, or ought to be, full of soul blessing*—"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." In the second place—*the pursuit of the believer ought always to be soul winning*. The second is much the same as the first, only the first head sets forth our unconscious influence, and the second our efforts which we put forth with the avowed object of winning souls for Christ.

I. Let us begin at the beginning, because the second cannot be carried

out without the first : without fulness of life within there cannot be an overflow of life to others. It is of no use for any of you to try to be soul winners if you are not bearing fruit in your own lives. How can you serve the Lord with your lips if you do not serve him with your lives ? How can you preach with your tongues his gospel, when with hands, feet, and hearts you are preaching the devil's gospel, and setting up antichrist by your practical unholiness ? We must first have life and bear personal fruit to the divine glory, and then out of our example will spring the conversion of others. Let us go to the fountain head and see how the man's own life is essential to his being useful to others. THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER IS FULL OF SOUL BLESSING : this fact we shall consider by means of a few observations growing out of the text ; and first let us remark that *the believer's outward life comes as a matter of fruit from him*. This is important to notice. The fruit of the righteous—that is to say his life—is not a thing fastened upon him, but it grows out of him. It is not a garment which he puts off and on, but it is inseparable from himself. The sincere man's religion is the man himself, and not a cloak for his concealment. True godliness is the natural outgrowth of a renewed nature, not the forced growth of pious hothouse excitement. Is it not natural for a vine to bear clusters of grapes ? natural for a palm tree to bear dates ? Certainly, as natural as it is for the apples of Sodom to be found on the trees of Sodom, and for noxious plants to produce poisonous berries. When God gives a new nature to his people, the life which comes out of that new nature springs spontaneously from it. The man who has a religion which is not part and parcel of himself will by-and-by discover that it is worse than useless to him. The man who wears his piety like a mask at a carnival, so that when he gets home, he changes from a saint to a savage, from an angel to a devil, from John to Judas, from a benefactor to a bully,—such a man, I say, knows very well what formalism and hypocrisy can do for him, but he has no vestige of true religion. Fig trees do not bear figs on certain days and thorns at other times, but they are true to their nature at all seasons. Those who think that godliness is a matter of vestment, and has an intimate relation with blue and scarlet, and fine linen, are consistent if they keep their religion to the proper time for the wearing of their sacred pomposities, but he who has discovered what Christianity is knows that it is much more a life than an act, a form, or a profession. Much as I love the creed of Christendom, I am ready to say that true Christianity is far more a life than a creed. It is a creed, and it has its ceremonies, but it is mainly a life ; it is a divine spark of heaven's own flame which falls into the human bosom and burns within, consuming much that lies hidden in the soul, and then at last, as a heavenly life, flaming forth, so as to be seen and felt by those around. Under the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit a regenerate person becomes like that bush in Horeb, which was all aglow with Deity. The God within him makes him shine so that the place around him is holy ground, and those who look at him feel the power of his hallowed life. Dear brethren, we must take care that our religion is more and more a matter of outgrowth from our souls. Many professors are hedged about with, “You must not do this, or that,” and are driven onward with, “You must do this, and you must do that.” But there is a doctrine, too often perverted, which is,

nevertheless, a blessed truth, and ought to dwell in your hearts. "Ye are not under the law but under grace": hence you do not obey the will of God because you hope to earn heaven thereby, or dream of escaping from divine wrath by your own doings, but because there is a life in you which seeks after that which is holy, pure, right, and true, and cannot endure that which is evil. You are careful to maintain good works, not from either legal hopes or legal fears, but because there is a holy thing within you, born of God, which seeks, according to its nature, to do that which is pleasing to God. Look to it more and more that your religion is real, true, natural, vital—not artificial, constrained, superficial, a thing of times, days, places, a fungus produced by excitement, a fermentation generated by meetings and stirred by oratory. We all need a religion which can live either in a wilderness, or in a crowd; a religion which will show itself in every walk of life, and in every company. Give me the godliness which is seen at home, especially around the fireside, for it is never more beautiful than there; that is seen in the battle and tussle of ordinary business among scoffers and gainsayers as well as among Christian men. Show me the faith which can defy the lynx eyes of the world, and walk fearlessly where all scowl with the fierce eyes of hate, where there are observers to sympathize, and friends to judge leniently. May you be filled with the life of the Spirit, and your whole conduct and conversation be the natural and blessed outgrowth of that Spirit's indwelling!

Note next that *the fruit which comes from a Christian is fruit worthy of his character*—"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." Each tree bears its own fruit, and is known by it. The righteous man bears righteous fruit; and do not let us be at all deceived, brethren, or fall into any error about this, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous," and "he that doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." We are prepared, I hope, to die for the doctrine of justification by faith, and to assert before all adversaries that salvation is not of works; but we also confess that we are justified by a faith which produces works, and if any man has a faith which does not produce good works, it is the faith of devils. Saving faith appropriates the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and so saves by itself alone, for we are justified by faith without works; but the faith which is without works cannot bring salvation to any man. We are saved by faith without works, but not by a faith that is without works, for the real faith that saves the soul works by love and purifies the character. If you can cheat across the counter, your hope of heaven is a cheat too; though you can pray as prettily as anybody, and practice acts of outward piety as well as any other hypocrite, you are deceived if you expect to be right at last. If as a servant you are lazy, lying, and loitering, or if as a master you are hard, tyrannical, and unchristianlike towards your men, your fruit shows that you are a tree of Satan's own orchard, and bear apples which will suit his tooth. If you can practise tricks of trade, and if you can lie—and how many do lie every day about their neighbours or about their goods—you may talk about being justified by faith as you like, but all liars will have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and amongst the biggest liars will be, for you are guilty of the lie of saying, "I am a Christian."

whereas you are not. A false profession is one of the worst of lies, since it brings the utmost dishonour upon Christ and his people. The fruit of the righteous is righteousness: the fig tree will not bring forth thorns, neither shall we gather grapes from thistles. The tree is known by its fruit, and if we cannot judge men's hearts, and must not try to do so, we can judge their lives, and I pray God we may all be ready to judge our own lives and see if we are bringing forth righteous fruit, for if not, we are not righteous men. Let it, however, never be forgotten that the fruit of the righteous, though it comes from him naturally, for his new-born nature yields the sweet fruit of obedience, yet it is always the result of grace, and the gift of God. No truth ought to be remembered more than this, "In me is thy fruit found." We can bring forth no fruit, except as we abide in Christ. The righteous shall flourish *as a branch*, and only as a branch. How does a branch flourish? By its connection with the stem, and the consequent inflowing of the sap; and so, though the righteous man's righteous actions are his own, yet they are always produced by the grace which is imparted to him, and he never dares to take any credit for them, but he sings, "Not unto us, but unto thy name give praise." If he fails, he blames himself; if he succeeds, he glorifies God. Imitate his example. Lay every fault, every weakness, every infirmity at your own door, and if you fall in any respect short of perfection—and I am sure you do—take all that to yourself, and do not excuse yourself; but if there be any virtue, any praise, any true desire, any real prayer, anything that is good, ascribe it all to the Spirit of God. Remember, the righteous man would not be righteous unless God had made him righteous, and the fruit of righteousness would never come from him unless the divine sap within him had produced that acceptable fruit. To God alone be all honour and glory.

The main lesson of the passage is that this outburst of life from the Christian, this consequence of life within him, *this fruit of his soul, becomes a blessing to others*. Like a tree, it yields shade and sustenance to all around. It is a tree of life, an expression which I cannot fully work out to-night as I would wish, for there is a world of instruction compressed into the illustration. That which to the believer himself is fruit becomes to others a tree: it is a singular metaphor, but by no means a lame one. From the child of God there falls the fruit of holy living, even as an acorn drops from the oak; this holy living becomes influential and produces the best results in others, even as the acorn becomes itself an oak, and lends its shade to the birds of the air. The Christian's holiness becomes a tree of life. I suppose it means a living tree, a tree calculated to give life and sustain it in others. A fruit becomes a tree! A tree of life! Wonderful result this! Christ in the Christian produces a character which becomes a tree of life. The outward character is the fruit of the inner life; this outer life itself grows from a fruit into a tree, and as a tree it bears fruit in others to the praise and glory of God. Dear brothers and sisters, I know some of God's saints who live very near to him, and they are evidently a tree of life, for their very shadow is comforting, cooling, and refreshing to many weary souls. I have known the young, the tried, the downcast, go to them, sit beneath their shade, and pour out the tale of their troubles, and they have felt it a rich blessing to receive their sympathy,

to be told of the faithfulness of the Lord, and to be guided in the way of wisdom. There are a few good men in this world whom to know is to be rich. Such men are libraries of gospel truth, but they are better than books, for the truth in them is written on living pages. Their character is a true and living tree; it is not a mere post of the dead wood of doctrine, bearing an inscription, and rotting while it does so, but it is a vital, organised, fruit-producing thing, a plant of the Lord's right hand planting.

Not only do some saints give comfort to others, but they also yield them spiritual nourishment. Well-trained Christians become nursing fathers and nursing mothers, strengthening the weak, and binding up the wounds of the broken hearted. So, too, the strong, bold, generous deeds of large-hearted Christians are of great service to their fellow Christians, and tend to raise them to a higher level. You feel refreshed by observing how they act; their patience in suffering, their courage in danger, their holy faith in God, their happy faces under trial—all these nerve you for your own conflicts. In a thousand ways the sanctified believer's example acts in a healing and comforting way to his brethren, and assists in raising them above anxiety and unbelief. Even as the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the people, so the words and deeds of saints are medicine for a thousand maladies.

And then what fruit instructed believers bear, sweet to the taste of the godly. We can never trust in men as we trust in the Lord, but the Lord can cause the members to bless us in their measure, even as their Head is ever ready to do. Jesus alone is *the* tree of life, but he makes some of his servants to be instrumentally to us little trees of life, by whom he gives us fruit of the same sort that he bears himself, for he puts it there, and it is himself in his saints causing them to bring forth golden apples, with which our souls are gladdened. May we every one of us be made like our Lord, and may his fruit be found upon our boughs.

We have put into the tomb during last year many of the saints who have fallen asleep, and among them there were some of whom I will not at this moment speak particularly, whose lives as I look back upon them are still a tree of life to me. I pray God that I may be like them. Many of you knew them, and if you will only recall their holy, devoted lives, the influence they have left behind will still be a tree of life to you. They being dead yet speak, hear ye their eloquent exhortations! Even in their ashes live their wonted fires; kindle your souls at their warmth. Their noble examples are the endowments of the church, her children are ennobled and enriched as they remember their walk of faith and labour of love. Beloved, may we every one of us be true benedictions to the churches in whose gardens we are planted. "Oh," says one, "I am afraid I am not much like a tree, for I feel so weak and insignificant." If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed you have the commencement of the tree beneath whose branches the birds of the air will yet find a lodging. The very birds that would have eaten the tiny seed come and find lodgment in the tree which grows out of it; and people who despise and mock at you now that you are a young beginner, will one of these days, if God blesses you, be glad to borrow comfort from your example and experience.

But one other thought on this point. Remember *the completeness and development of the holy life will be seen above*. There is a city of which it is written, "In the midst of the street thereof, and on every side of the river was there the tree of life." The tree of life is a heavenly plant, and so the fruit of the Christian is a thing of heaven; though not transplanted to the glory land it is getting fit for its final abode. What is holiness but heaven on earth? What is living unto God but the essence of heaven? What are uprightness, integrity, Christ-likeness? Have not these even more to do with heaven than harps and palms and streets of purest gold? Holiness, purity, loveliness of character, these make a heaven within a man's own bosom, and even if there were no place called heaven that heart would have a heavenly happiness which is set free from sin and made like the Lord Jesus. See, then, dear brethren, what an important thing it is for us to be indeed righteous before God, for then the outcome of that righteousness shall be fruit which will be a tree of life to others, and a tree of life in heaven above, world without end. O blessed Spirit make it so, and thou shalt have all the praise.

II. This brings us to our second head. **THE PURSUIT OF THE BELIEVER SHOULD BE SOUL WINNING.** For "he that winneth souls is wise." The two things are put together—the life first, the effort next: what God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

It is implied in our text that there are souls which need winning. Ah me, all souls of men are lost by nature. You might walk through the streets of London and say of the masses of men you meet upon those crowded pavements with sighs and tears—"Lost, lost, lost!" Wherever Christ is not trusted, and the Spirit has not created a new heart, and the soul has not come to the great Father, there is a lost soul. But here is the mercy—these lost souls can be won. They are not hopelessly lost; not yet has God determined that they shall for ever abide as they are. It is not yet said, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still;" but they are in the land of hope where mercy may reach them, for they are spoken of as capable of being won. They may yet be delivered, but the phrase hints that it will need all our efforts. "He that winneth souls." What do we mean by that word win. We use it in *lovmaking*. We speak of the bridegroom who wins his bride, and sometimes there is a large expense of love, many a pleading word, and many a wooing act, ere yet the valued heart is all the suitor's own. I use this explanation because in some respects it is the very best, for souls will have to be won for Christ in this fashion, that they may be espoused unto him. We must make love to the sinner for Christ; that is how hearts are to be won for him. Jesus is the bridegroom, and we must speak for him, and tell of his beauty as Abraham's servant, when he went to seek a wife for Isaac, acted as a wooer in his stead. Have you never read the story? Then turn to it when you get home, and see how he talked about his master, what possessions he had, and how Isaac was to be heir of it all, and so on, and then he finished his address by urging Rebecca to go with him. The question was put home to her, "Wilt thou go with this man?" So the minister's business is to commend his Master and his Master's riches, and then to say to souls, "Will you be wedded to Christ?" He who can succeed in this very delicate business is a wise man.

We also use the term in a *military* fashion. We speak of winning a city, a castle, or a battle. We do not win victories by going to sleep. Believe me, castles are not captured by men who are only half awake. To win a battle needs the best skill, the greatest endurance and the utmost courage. To storm fortresses which are regarded as almost impregnable men need to burn the midnight oil, and study well the arts of attack; and, when the time comes for the assault not a soldier must be a laggard, but all force of artillery and manhood must be brought to bear on the point assailed. To carry man's heart by main force of grace, to capture it, to break down the bars of brass and dash the gates of iron in pieces requires the exercise of a skill which only Christ can give. To bring up the big battering rams, and shake every stone in the sinner's conscience, to make his heart rock and reel within him for fear of the the wrath to come, in a word, to assail a soul with all the artillery of the gospel needs a wise man, and one aroused to his work. To hold up the white flag of mercy, and, if that be despised, to use the battering ram of threatening until a breach is made, and then with the sword of the Spirit in his hand to capture the city, to tear down the black flag of sin and run up the banner of the cross, needs all the force the choicest preacher can command and a great deal more. Those whose souls are as cold as the Arctic regions, and whose energy is reduced to the vanishing point, are not likely to take the city of Mansoul for Prince Emanuel. If you think you are going to win souls, you must throw your soul into your work just as a warrior must throw his soul into a battle, or victory will not be yours.

We use the words "to win" in reference to *making a fortune*, and we all know that the man who becomes a millionaire has to rise up early, and sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness, and it takes a deal of toiling and saving, and I know not what besides, to amass immense wealth. We have to go in for winning souls with the same ardour and concentration of our faculties as old Astor of New York went in to build up that fortune of so many millions which he has now left behind him. It is, indeed, *a race*, and you know that in a race nobody wins unless he strains every muscle and sinew. They that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize; and that one is generally he who had more strength than the rest; certainly, whether he had more strength or not, he put out all he had, and we shall not win souls unless we imitate him in this.

Solomon in the text declares that, "He that winneth souls is wise," and such a declaration is all the more valuable as coming from so wise a man. Let me show you why a true soul-winner is wise. First, *he must be taught of God before he will attempt it*. The man who does not know that whereas he was once blind now he sees, had better think of his own blindness before he attempts to lead his friends in the right way. If not saved yourself, you cannot be the means of saving others. He that winneth souls must be wise unto salvation first for himself. That being taken for granted, *he is a wise man to select such a pursuit*. Young man, are you choosing an object worthy to be the great aim of your life? I do hope you will judge wisely, and select a noble ambition. If God has given you great gifts, I hope they will not be wasted on any low, sordid, or selfish design. Suppose I am now addressing one who

has great talents, and has an opportunity of being what he likes, of going into Parliament, and helping to pass wise measures, or of going into business and making himself a man of importance; I hope he will weigh the claims of Jesus and immortal souls as well as other claims. Shall I addict myself to study? Shall I surrender myself to business? Shall I travel? Shall I spend my time in pleasure? Shall I become the principal fox-hunter of the county? Shall I lay out my time in promoting political and social reforms? Think them all over; but if you are a Christian man, my dear friend, nothing will equal in enjoyment, in usefulness, in honour, and in lasting recompense the giving yourself up to the winning of souls. Oh, it is grand hunting, I can tell you, and beats all the fox hunting in the world in excitement and exhilaration. Have I not sometimes gone with a cry over hedge and ditch after some poor sinner, and kept well up with him in every twist and turn he took, till I have overtaken him by God's grace, and been in at the death, and rejoiced exceedingly when I have seen him captured by my Master. Our Lord Jesus calls his ministers fishermen, and no other fishermen have such labour, such sorrow, and such delight as we have. What a happy thing it is that you may win souls for Jesus, and may do this though you abide in your secular callings. Some of you would never win souls in pulpits, it would be a great pity if you tried, but you can win souls in the workshop, and in the laundry, in the nursery, and in the drawing-room. Our hunting grounds are everywhere: by the wayside, by the fireside, in the corner, and in the crowd. Among the common people Jesus is our theme, and among the great ones we have no other. You will be wise, my brother, if for you the one absorbing desire is that you may turn the ungodly from the error of their ways. For you there will be a crown glittering with many stars, which you shall cast at Jesus' feet in the day of his appearing.

Further, it is not only wise to make this your aim, but *you will have to be very wise if you succeed in it*, because the souls to be won are so different in their constitutions, feelings, and conditions, and you will have to adapt yourselves to them all. The trappers of North America have to find out the habits of the animals they wish to catch, and so you will have to learn how to deal with each class of cases. Some are very depressed, you will have to comfort them. Perhaps you will comfort them too much, and make them unbelieving; and, therefore, possibly instead of comforting them you will need sometimes to administer a sharp word to cure the sulkiness into which they have fallen. Another person may be frivolous, and if you put on a serious face you will frighten your bird away; you will have to be cheerful and drop a word of admonition as if by accident. Some people, again, will not let you speak to them, but will talk to you; you must know the art of putting a word in edgeways. You will have to be very wise, and become all things to all men, and your success will prove your wisdom. Theories of dealing with souls may look very wise, but they often prove to be useless when actually tried: he who by God's grace accomplishes the work is a wise man, though perhaps he knows no theory whatever. This work will need all your wit, and far more, and you will have to cry to the great winner of souls above to give you of his Holy Spirit.

But, mark you, he that wins souls is wise, because *he is engaged in a business which makes men wiser as they proceed with it.* You will bungle at first, and very likely drive sinners off from Christ by your attempts to draw them to him. I have tried to move some souls with all my might with a certain passage of Scripture, but they have taken it in an opposite light to what it was intended, and have started off in the wrong direction. It is very difficult to know how to act with bewildered enquirers. If you want some people to go forward you must pull them backwards; if you want them to go to the right you must insist upon their going to the left, and then they go to the right directly. You must be ready for these follies of poor human nature. I knew a poor aged Christian woman who had been a child of God fifty years, but she was in a state of melancholy and distress, from which nobody could arouse her. I called several times and endeavoured to cheer her up, but generally when I left she was worse than before. So the next time I called to see her I did not say anything to her about Christ or religion. She soon introduced those topics herself, and then I remarked that I was not going to talk to her about such holy things, for she did not know anything about them, for she was not a believer in Christ, and had been, no doubt, a hypocrite for many years. She could not stand that, and asserted, in self-defence, that the Lord above knew her better than I did, and he was her witness that she did love the Lord Jesus Christ. She scarcely forgave herself afterwards for that admission, but she could never talk to me quite so despairingly any more. True lovers of men's souls learn the art of dealing with them, and the Holy Spirit makes them expert soul surgeons for Jesus. It is not because a man has more abilities, nor altogether because he has more grace, but the Lord makes him to love the souls of men intensely, and this imparts a secret skill, since for the most part the way to get sinners to Christ is to love them to Christ.

Beloved brethren, I will say once more *he who really wins souls for Jesus, however he wins them, is a wise man.* Some of you are slow to admit this. You say—Well, so-and-so, I dare say, has been very useful, but he is very rough. What does his roughness matter if he wins souls? Ah, says another, but I am not built up under him. Why do you go to hear him, to get built up? If the Lord has sent him to pull down, let him pull down, and do you go elsewhere for edification; but do not grumble at a man who does one work because he cannot do another. We are also too apt to pit one minister against another, and say you should hear *my* minister. Perhaps we should, but it would be better for you to hear the man who edifies you, and let others go where they also are instructed. "He that winneth souls is wise." I do not ask you how he did it. He sang the gospel, and you did not like it, but if he won souls he was wise. Soul-winners have all their own ways, and if they do but win souls they are wise. I will tell you what is not wise, and will not be thought so at the last, namely to go about the churches doing nothing yourself and railing at all the Lord's useful servants. Here is a dear brother on his dying bed, he has the sweet thought that the Lord enabled him to bring many souls to Jesus, and the expectation when he comes to the gates that many spirits will come to meet him. They will throng the ascent to the New Jerusalem, and welcome the man who

brought them to Jesus. They are immortal monuments to his labours. He is wise. Here is another who has spent all his time in interpreting the prophecies; so that everything he read of in the newspapers he could see in Daniel or the Revelation. He is wise, so some say, but I had rather spend my time in winning souls. I would sooner bring one sinner to Jesus Christ than unpick all the mysteries of the divine word, for salvation is the thing we are to live for. I would to God that I understood all mysteries, yet chief of all would I proclaim the mystery of soul-saving by faith in the blood of the Lamb. It is comparatively a small matter for a minister to have been a staunch upholder of orthodoxy all his days, and to have spent himself in keeping up the hedges of his church; soul winning is the main concern. It is a very good thing to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; but I do not think I should like to say in my last account, "Lord, I have lived to fight the Romanists and the State church, and to put down the various erroneous sects, but I never led a sinner to the cross." No, we will fight the good fight of faith, but the winning of souls is the greater matter, and he who attends to it is wise. Another brother has preached the truth, but he did so polish up his sermons that the gospel was hidden. Never a sermon was fit to preach, he thought, until he had written it out a dozen times to see whether every sentence would be according to the canons of Cicero and Quintillian, and then he went and delivered the gospel as a grand oration. Is that wise? Well, it takes a wise man to be a thorough orator; but it is better not to be an orator if fine speech prevents your being understood. Let eloquence be flung to the dogs rather than souls be lost. What we want is to win souls, and they are not to be won by flowery speeches. We must have the winning of souls at heart, and be red hot with zeal for their salvation, and then however much we blunder, according to the critics, we shall be numbered among those whom the Lord calls wise.

Now, Christian men and women, I want you to take this matter up practically, and to determine that you will try this very night to win a soul. Try the one next to you in the seat if you cannot think of anybody else. Try on the way home; try with your own children. Have I not told you of what happened one Sunday six months ago. In my sermon I said, "Now, you mothers, have you ever prayed with each of your children, one by one, and urged them to lay hold on Christ? Perhaps dear Jane is now in bed, and you have never yet pleaded with her about eternal things. Go home to-night, wake her up and say, 'Jane, I am sorry I have never told you about the Saviour personally, and prayed with you, but I mean to do it now.' Wake her up, and put your arms round her neck, and pour out your heart to God with her." Well, there was a good sister here who had a daughter named Jane. What do you think? She came on Monday to bring her daughter Jane to see me in the vestry, for when she woke her up and began, "I have not spoken to you about Jesus," or something to that effect, "Oh, dear mother," said Jane, "I have loved the Saviour these six months, and wondered you had not spoken to me about him;" and then there was such kissing and rejoicing. Perhaps you may find that to be the case with a dear child at home, and, if you do not, so much the more reason why you should begin at once to speak. Did you never win a soul for

Jesus? You shall have a crown in heaven, but no jewels in it. You will go to heaven childless; and you know how it was in the old times, how the women dreaded lest they should be childless. Let it be so with Christian people; let them dread being spiritually childless. We *must* hear the cries of those whom God has given to be born unto himself by our means. We *must* hear them, or else cry out in anguish, "Give me converts or I die." Young men, and old men, and sisters of all ages, if you love the Lord get a passion for souls. Do you not see them? they are going down to hell by thousands; as often as the hand upon the dial completes its circuit, hell devours multitudes, some of them ignorant of Christ, and others willfully rejecting him. The world lies in darkness: this great city still pines for the light: your own friends and kinsfolk are unsaved, and they may be dead ere this week is over. Oh, if you have any humanity, let alone Christianity, if you have found the remedy tell the diseased about it. If you have found life, proclaim it to the dead; if you have found liberty, publish it to the captives; if you have found Christ tell of him to others. My brethren in the college, let this be your choice work while studying, and let it be the one object of your lives when you go forth from us. Do not be content when you get a congregation, but labour to win souls, and as you do this God will bless you. As for us, we hope during the rest of our lives to follow him who is *The* soul-winner, and to put ourselves in his hands who maketh us soul-winners, so that our life may not be a long folly, but may be proved by results to have been directed by wisdom.

O you souls not won to Jesus, remember that faith in Christ saves you. Trust in him. May you be led to trust in him for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans x.

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THE UNKNOWN WAYS OF LOVE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 14TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."—John xiii. 7.

THESE words of our Lord were spoken in answer to Peter's exclamation of surprise, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" It was a very natural expression of astonishment, and one which deserved no censure but at the same time it was not a very wise remark, for, albeit that it was a marvellously condescending action for the Lord Jesus to wash his disciples' feet, he had already performed a greater condescension by coming upon the earth at all in the form of a man. For the Son of the Highest to dwell among mortals in a human body, capable of being girt about with a napkin, and able to take a basin and pour water into it, is a far greater marvel than that he should, being a man, leave the supper table and act as a menial servant by washing his disciples' feet. Had Peter understood also what his Master had prophesied and explained to him, namely, the Lord's approaching sufferings and death, he would have seen that for his Master to take a towel and basin was little compared with his having our iniquities laid upon himself, and being made a sacrifice for sin. It surprises you much to see the Lord of glory wear a towel, does it not amaze you still more to see him clad in the purple robe of mockery? Are you not still more astonished to see his vesture stripped from him, and to hear him cry upon the cross, "I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me." It is wonderful that he should take the basin in the upper room, but surely it was more extraordinary that he should take the cup in the garden and drink in its full bitterness till he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. To wash the disciples' feet with water was certainly a surprising action, but to pour out his heart's blood to wash us all was greater far; for this involved his death, his making his grave with the wicked, and his being numbered with the transgressors. The expression of Peter is thus seen to be very

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natural, but not very profound. Dear brethren, do you not think it very likely that our pretty pious speeches, which strike us as very proper, and seem to our friends to be very commendable, will one of these days appear to be mere baby prattling, and do even now appear so to the Lord Jesus. Those choice sayings, and holy sentences, which we have read with admiration and greatly valued,—even those are not like the words of Jesus for solid intrinsic weight and worth, but may in other lights appear far less beautiful than they now do. I have myself proved in different humours and frames of mind that the very things which struck me as being so very deep and gracious have at other times appeared to be one-sided, shallow, or questionable. We know in part, and prophecy in part: our highest attainments here are those of little children, and even for the close student, the deeply experienced Christian, the venerable man of years and the graciously anointed instructor of the churches, there is no room for boasting.

Note next, that our Saviour answered Peter's speech in the words of the text, which are as admirable for their tone as for their matter. Which should we admire the most in this reply, its meekness or its majesty? To Peter's ignorant simplicity how gentle he is! "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." And yet how royally he confronts Peter's forward objection, and how distinctly his majestic personality puts down the too conspicuous individuality of Peter! "What I do thou knowest not now." How perfect the blending of the majesty and the meekness! Who shall tell which of the colours is best laid on? This is ever the way of our Lord Jesus. You shall find through life, beloved, that whenever Jesus Christ comes to rebuke you, he will do so powerfully but gently; he will speak as a friend, and as a king; you will feel both his love and his authority, and own the power both of his goodness and his greatness. His smile shall not make you presume, nor shall his royal glance cause you to tremble. You will find his left hand supporting you while in his right you see his imperial sceptre. Blessed Saviour, art thou more meek or more majestic? We cannot tell, but certainly to our hearts thou art both kind and kingly, sweet and sovereign, gracious and glorious.

Let us now come to the words themselves. We have looked at the occasion of them, and at the manner of them, and we will now weigh their matter. The words themselves have suggested to me many thoughts, and among them this, first, that IN OUR LORD'S DOINGS THERE IS MUCH WHICH WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND. Our text is not merely true about the washing of the feet, but it is true concerning all that our Lord doeth—"What I do thou knowest not now." We may know the external part of what he does, or think we do, but there is more in his actions than any of us can conceive. The external is not all; there are wrapped up within the mercies which we perceive other and yet greater mercies as yet unknown to us. You traverse the soil of Canaan and you drink of its rivers, and are refreshed by its corn and wine and oil, but the goodly land has hidden riches, its stones are iron, and out of its hills thou mayest dig brass. The brooks of which you drink derive their coolest waters from springs which have tapped "the deep which lieth under." If thou knowest in some measure what Jesus does, yet the mystery is not altogether laid bare to thine eye; there are folds of his

manifest grace which as yet are unopened. The work of Jesus is beyond thee—it is lower than thy fall, higher than thy desire; it surpasses thee, and is altogether too high for thee, thou canst not attain to the measurement thereof. Who can by searching find it out unto perfection?

Our want of knowledge of the divine doings is a wide subject, and I shall not attempt to explore its hithermost boundaries, but shall restrain myself by the text. Brethren, there are many things that God doeth which we cannot understand now, and probably never shall. For instance, why he permitted evil at first and tolerates it still. To this enquiry the divine answer would be "What I do thou knowest not." Leave that alone. It is our highest wisdom to be ignorant where God has not enlightened us. It is great folly to pretend to know when we do not, and there lives not a man, nor ever will live a man, who has even an approximation to an understanding of the dread mystery of the existence of moral evil. The bottom of this abyss no mind can reach, and he is foolhardy who ventures on the plunge. Let this dread secret alone, thou canst not endure the white heat which burns around it. Many a man has lost the eyes of his reason while trying to peer into this fiery furnace. What hast thou to do with that which God conceals from thee? It is God's business, not thine: the thing was done ere thou wast born, and he who permitted it can answer for himself if he careth so to do. So, also, with regard to predestination: that God ordaineth all things, and has before his eye the chart of everything that has been, is, or shall be, is most true; but who knoweth the depths of foreknowledge and destiny? To sit down and pluck the eternal purposes to pieces, to question their justice, and impugn their wisdom, is both folly and audacity. Here the darkness thickens, and out of it comes forth the oracle—"What I do thou knowest not." The things which are revealed belong to us and to our children; and as to the unrevealed, if it be to the glory of God to conceal a thing, let it be concealed. Jesus has rent the veil of the holy place, and into the secret of divine love you may now freely enter, but other veils which he rends not you may not touch. Some truths are closed up from our understanding, even as the ark of the covenant was shut against prying eyes; let us not violate their sanctity lest we meet the doom of the men of Beth-shemesh, but let us zealously guard them as priceless treasures, that we may obtain the blessing which rested upon the house of Obed-edom. The same remark applies to the great designs of God in providence. He is pleased in prophecy often to tell us what he has meant by his providence, and perhaps it will be one of the enjoyments of the future state to see the hand of God in the whole current of history; but while incidents are occurring we must not expect to understand their drift and bearing. The wonderful tapestry of human history, all woven in the loom of God's infinite wisdom, will astonish both men and angels when it is complete; but while it is yet unfinished it will not be possible for us to imagine the completed pattern. From between those wheels of providence, which are full of eyes, I hear a voice which saith, "What I do thou knowest not now."

But we will confine ourselves to the loving acts of the Lord Jesus Christ, since what the Lord was doing with Peter was not very mysterious, nor a deed of transcendent power, nor of stern justice. He was

humbly girding himself with a towel and pouring water into a basin to wash his followers' feet. It was a very simple matter, and evidently a very gracious, kind, and condescending act; but yet, even concerning that, Jesus said, "What I do thou knowest not now."

My brethren, even the acts of our Lord Jesus Christ in his loving condescension we do not fully understand. Ah, think a minute; how can we? Does not our Lord's love always surpass our knowledge, since he himself is the greatest of all mysteries? Let me read these words to you: "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself." Do you understand the higher and the lower points of this transaction? You must comprehend them both before you can see what he has done. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand." Can you see the glory of this? Jesus our Lord was conscious that his Father had made him Head over all things to his church, and that he had laid the government upon his shoulders, and given him the key of David, that he might open and no man shut, and shut and no man open. He knew assuredly that at his girdle swung the keys of heaven and death and hell, and that having fulfilled the commission of the Eternal God he was about to return to his throne. Have you grasped the idea? Do you perceive the glory of which Jesus was conscious? If you have done so, then descend by one long sweep:—he, this Lord of all, having all things in his hand, takes off his garments, foregoes the common dress of an ordinary man, and places himself in the undress of a servant, and wears a towel, that he may do service to his own disciples. Can you follow him from such a height to such a depth? A superior in the East never washes an inferior's feet: Christ acts as if he were inferior to his friends, inferior to those poor fishermen, inferior to those foolish scholars who learned so slowly, with whom he had been so long a time and yet they did not know him, who soon forgot what they knew, and needed line upon line and precept upon precept. Having loved them to the end, he stoops to the extreme of stooping, and bows at their feet to cleanse their defilements. Who, I say, can compute the depth of this descent? You cannot know what Christ has done for you, because you cannot conceive how high he is by nature, neither can you guess how low he stooped in his humiliation and death. With an eagle's wing you could not soar so high as to behold him as God over all blessed for ever, sitting at the right hand of the Father, the adored of cherubim and seraphim: nor could you dive, even if you dared to take a plunge into the abyss, until you reached the depth of "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me": and yet you must somehow know the interval, I was about to say the infinity, between these two points of height and depth before you could know what Jesus has done for you.

Moreover, think awhile. Was anything that Jesus did understood while he was doing it? He is born a babe in Bethlehem, but who knew what he did in the manger? A few shepherds and sages and two or three favoured saints discerned the Saviour in the babe, but to the mass of mankind he was unknown. God came on earth, and angels sung his advent, but O earth thy Lord might have said

to thee, "What I do thou knowest not now." He lived here the life of a mechanic's son: that life was the most august event in all human history, but men knew not what it was or what it meant. "The world knew him not." He came forward to preach the gospel; did they know who it was that spake as never man spake? Did they comprehend what he spake? Ah, no. He was hid from their eyes. At last he laid aside the life he had so strangely taken; who knew the reason of his death upon the cross? Did even his disciples know though he had told them? When earth shook, and graves were opened by his last cry, did even his own followers understand what a sacrifice had been offered? No, and till the Spirit was poured upon them from on high they did not comprehend that it behoved Christ to suffer. He could say to each of his own disciples, of all that he had done, "What I do thou knowest not now."

This is true too of every separate gift which our Lord's love has given to his people. You have been justified in Jesus Christ, but do you fully know the wondrous righteousness with which justification by faith has endowed you? You are accepted in the beloved, but did any one of you ever realise what it is to have full acceptance with the Father? I know you have realised the fact and rejoiced in it, but have you known, ay, can you know the full sweetness of its meaning? You are one with Christ, and members of his body: comprehend you that? You are joint heirs with Christ, know you the full significance of that? He is betrothed unto you in an everlasting marriage, know you what that meaneth? Ah no; these wonders of his love, we hear of them and we believe them, but "What I do," saith he, "thou knowest not now."

Our Lord is doing great things by way of preparing us for a higher state of existence. We shall soon be rid of this vile body, and be released from this narrow world: we are going to a sphere more suited for our heaven-born life, where we shall be the comrades of angels and commune with the spirits of the just made perfect, and serve the Lord day and night in his temple, but what the glory shall be we do not know, for the ear hath not heard it, nor the eye beheld it, nor the heart conceived it. As for the preparations which are going on within us to make us ready for this sublime condition, we know that they are being carried on, but we cannot as yet see their course, their separate tendencies, and their ultimate issues. The instrument does not comprehend the tuner: the tuner fetches harsh sounds from those disordered strings, but all those jarring notes are necessary to the harmonious condition which he is aiming to produce. If the discords were not discovered now, the music of the future would be marred. My brethren, concerning all that Christ has done it is true, "What I do thou knowest not now." Oh, if his work were little we could measure it, if his love were scanty we could know it, if his wisdom were finite we could judge it; but, where everything is past finding out, who can pretend to know? Remember, that in our salvation Christ himself is the sum and substance, in it every attribute of his divinity is brought into exercise to the full, he makes it his glory, counting our salvation to be his coronet and crown jewels; and therefore it is not at all marvellous that we should not know what he does.

II. Our second thought is a sweet one. OUR WANT OF UNDER-

STANDING DOES NOT PREVENT THE EFFICACY OF OUR LORD'S WORK. "What I do thou knowest not now," and it does not signify: the Lord will do it just as well. Peter does not know what Christ is doing when he washes his feet, but the Master washes them just as clean whether Peter understands it or not. Jesus did not say, "There, Peter, you do not understand what I am doing by washing your feet, and so I shall not wash them until you do." No, no; he moves on with the basin and towel, and washes them clean, though Peter does not know why. Is not this a great mercy, brethren, that the blessings which Christ bestows upon us are not dependent for their efficacy upon our capacity to understand them? Just look out a little in the world and see how true this is. A mother has her little child on her lap, and she is washing its face: the child does not like the water, and it cries. Ah, babe, if thou couldst understand it thou wouldst smile. The child cries and struggles in the mother's arms, but it is washed all the same; the mother waits not for the child to know what she is doing, but completes her work of love. So is the Lord often exercising divine arts upon us, and we do not appreciate them, neither are we pleased; perhaps we even strive against his work of love, but for all that he perseveres, and turns not away his hand because of our crying. Does the tree understand pruning, the land comprehend ploughing? yet pruning and ploughing produce their good results. The physician stands at the bedside of the patient and gives him medicine, medicine which is unpalatable, and which in its operation causes the patient to feel worse than he was before; this the sufferer cannot understand, and therefore he draws unhappy conclusions; but the power of the medicine does not depend upon the patient's understanding its qualities, and therefore it will do him good, though it puzzles him by its strange manner of working. If a fool eats his dinner, it will satisfy his hunger as much as if he were a philosopher, and understood the processes of digestion. This is a great mercy, for the most of men can never become philosophers. It is not necessary for a man to be learned in the nature of caloric in order to be warmed by the fire, or comforted by a great coat. A man may be ignorant of the laws of light, and yet be able to see; he may know nothing of acoustics, and yet be quick of hearing. A passenger who does not know a valve from a wheel, enters a carriage at the station, and he will be drawn to his journey's end by the engine as well as if he were learned in mechanics. It is the same in the spiritual as in the natural world. The efficacy of spiritual forces does not depend upon our capacity to understand them. I have mentioned this very simple fact because it really is necessary for us to remember it. We are so knowing, or think we are: we think it so essential that we should form a judgment of what the Lord is doing. Ah, dear brethren, there are more essential things than this. It is better to trust, to submit, to obey, to love, than to know. Let the Lord alone; he is doing rightly enough, be sure of that. Is he to be questioned and cross-questioned by us? Are we to judge his judgment? Dare we demand answers to our impertinent enquiries and say, why this, and why that, and why the other? Were he a God if he would submit to such examination? If we call ourselves his disciples, how can we justify a spirit which would arraign our Lord? Be still and know that he is God. What more

would you know? Remember that the things which you understand are for your good, but they can only bring you a small amount of benefit, because they must be in themselves small, or you would not be able to measure them. When a great, deep good is coming to you, you will not be able to comprehend it, for your comprehension is narrow: yet it will be none the less but all the more a blessing because you know it not. Joseph is gone, and here is his bloody coat! "Without doubt he is torn in pieces! All these things are against me. Ah, how my heart is broken with the loss of my darling child; I cannot understand it; it cannot be right." So talks poor Jacob, but it was right, all the same for that. Joseph was on the sure road to Pharaoh's throne, and to providing for his brethren in the land of Egypt. So it is with you, my brother, under your present trial and affliction; you cannot understand it now, but that does not make a pennyworth of difference; it is working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Be content to let faith rule, and knowledge wait, and what thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter.

III. A third thought is that OUR NOT BEING ABLE TO KNOW WHAT THE LORD DOETH SHOULD NEVER SHAKE OUR CONFIDENCE IN HIM. I hope, dear brethren, our faith in Christ does not rest upon our capacity to understand what he does: if so, I fear it is not faith at all, but a mere exercise of self-conceited carnal reason. Some things which the Lord has done bear upon their very forefront the impress of his infinite love, but I hope you know enough of him now to be able to believe that where there are no traces of love apparent to you, his love is as surely there. I rejoice in that part of my text which runs thus: "What I do." This washing of the feet was not being done by Bartholomew, or Nathanael: it was the personal act of the Lord himself. Now, when the Master and Lord is the actor, who wants to raise a question or to suggest enquiry? It must be right if he does it: to question his conduct would be an insult to his majestic love. Do you know Christ? Then you know the character of his deeds? Do you know your Lord? Then you are sure that he will never act unkindly, unbecomingly, or unwisely. He can never send a needless sorrow, or wantonly cause a tear to flow. Can he? Here, then, is the question, not—why is it done? but, who is doing it? and if the Lord is doing it, we can have no doubt about the excellence of his design. We believe that he is right when we cannot see that he is so. If we do not trust him far beyond what we know, it will show that our confidence in him is very limited. When a person only obeys another because he chooses to obey, and sees it a proper thing to do, he has not the spirit of implicit obedience at all; and when a person only confides in another as far as he can see that he is safe, he is a stranger to implicit confidence. Confidence has its sphere beyond the boundaries of knowledge: where judgment ceases, faith begins. "What I do thou knowest not now." Ah, thou best beloved of our souls, in that saidst thou truly, but we can reply to thee, that we know and are sure that what thou doest is supremely good.

IV. Fourthly, OUR WANT OF UNDERSTANDING AS TO WHAT OUR LORD DOES GENERALLY SHOWS ITSELF MOST IN REFERENCE TO HIS PERSONAL DEALINGS WITH OURSELVES. "What I do thou knowest not now"

refers to his washing Peter's feet. Brethren, if there is anything which we are not likely to understand thoroughly well it is that which has to do with ourselves. We are too close home to see clearly. In this case the looker-on sees more than the player. We generally form a better opinion of the character, position, and needs of another than we do concerning ourselves. It is said of Moses' face that every one saw it shine but one man, and that was Moses, for he could not see his own countenance. So, also, if a man's face be black it is black to everybody but himself; he does not see his own spots. We cannot form accurate estimates of ourselves, and so we must not expect when Christ is personally dealing with us that we should be able to understand what he does to us. Besides, if the Lord be dealing with us in an afflicting way, we are generally in an unfavourable state of mind for forming any judgment at all, being, as a rule, too disturbed in mind by the affliction itself. When an hospital patient is under the knife he is a poor judge of the necessity of the operation or the skill of the surgeon. In after days, when the wound has healed, he will judge better than he can do when the knife is just cutting through nerve, and sinew, and bone. Judge nothing before the time. You are not in a right condition to judge, and therefore do not attempt it. When you are smarting under the rod, your opinions, and estimates, and forecasts are about as much to be depended upon as the whistling of the wind or the dashing of the waves. Cease from judging, calculating, and foreboding, and believe that he who ordains our lot orders all things in kindness and wisdom.

I do not wonder that Peter was puzzled and could not understand his Lord's procedure, for it is always a hard thing for an active and energetic mind to see the wisdom of being compelled to do nothing. Here is a man who can drag a net to the shore full of big fishes, and instead of using his strength he is made to sit still and do nothing! Peter, the hardy, vigorous worker, must sit down like a gentleman, or a cripple, and do nothing. He cannot make it out. He has been very useful, and he thinks he could be useful now; he could at any rate wait at the table, or carry the basin, or wash his fellows' feet, if it must be done. But he is bound to sit still and do nothing, and he does not see it. Brethren, the hardest work a man ever has to do who wants to serve the Lord Jesus is to stand aside in forced inactivity and take no share in what is going on. It is hard to be put on the shelf among the cracked crockery, and to be of no more use than a broken vessel, while yet you feel you could be useful if you had but strength to leave your chamber. The proud idea that you have been wonderfully useful tempts you to repine at being laid among the lumber, and you feel it to be a very mysterious business altogether.

Then, what is worse, Peter not only cannot do anything, he is a receiver from others, and must be waited on by them, and chiefly by his Master, whom he at other times loved to serve. To have his feet washed must have appeared to a hardy fisherman like Peter a strange luxury. He would say, "Cannot I do it myself? I am not used to be waited on." To sit there, and, while doing nothing, to be also engrossing the care of another, must have been a singular position to him. It is very unpleasant to an active man to be unable to work and to be dependent upon others for every little detail and necessary of life. To borrow

other people's strength, and tax other people's care, is not desirable. To stand in need of anxious prayers, and to arouse pitying thoughts, seems strange to those who have been accustomed to do rather than to suffer. "Why," you seem to say, "I have prayed for them, I have worked for them; are they now to pray and work for me? I have fed the sheep; are the sheep going to feed me? I have washed the saints' feet; are they going to wash mine? Am I to be dependent upon others and not be able to lend a hand or lift a finger? Ah, well, we must not ask questions, but we are very apt to do so. We do not know, and we become inquisitive, but the Saviour says, "What I do thou knowest not now."

All the while there is very prominent in our mind a sense of insignificance and unworthiness, which makes our receipt of favours the more perplexing. "What," says Peter, "I, I unworthy Peter, shall I be washed by the Lord Jesus Christ?" So it seems to us unworthy sinners, "Why should God's people be thinking about me, and careful about me? Why has the Lord himself deigned to make my bed in my sickness? Why has his blessed Spirit condescended to be my comforter, applying precious promises to me? Whence is this to me?" We do not comprehend it; we are lost in wonder, and it is no marvel that we are.

Yet, dear brethren, if our eyes are opened, the Lord's afflicting dealings are not so wonderfully mysterious after all, for we need purging and cleansing even as Peter needed foot-washing. We greatly need the sacred purgation of Jesus' love for the removal of daily defilement. Sometimes trials in business, sad bereavements, acts of ingratitude, pains of sickness, or depressions of spirit, are just the basin and the water and the towel in which our Lord is washing our feet. We are clean through the blood of Jesus, but the daily cleansing we still need. It is a wonder that some of us are ever out of the furnace, for our dross is so abundant. I shall not be surprised if I find myself often under the flail, for the straw and the chaff are plentiful in me. Some metals are so apt to rust that it is no wonder that they are often burnished. Some soils need a deal of ploughing; they are very apt to cake and grow hard, and therefore must be broken up; so it is with us, there is a need be for what the Lord is doing.

In Peter's case there was a need be of fellowship, for our Lord said, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me." You cannot have fellowship with Christ except he does this or that for you, nay, especially except he tries you; for how shall you know the suffering Saviour except you suffer yourself? Communion with the afflicted Redeemer is promoted by our personal afflictions. There was a need be yet again for Peter and the rest to learn the lesson of washing their brethren's feet by seeing the Lord wash theirs. No man can rightly wash another's feet till his own feet have been washed by his Saviour. It is in the kingdom of Christ a law that there must be experience before there can be expertness. Thou must be comforted or thou canst not comfort; thou must find mercy thyself or thou canst not lead others in the search; thou must be washed or thou canst not wash. Thus there were good reasons for our Lord's act, but they were not seen by Peter, nor do the motives for our Lord's dispensations towards us always appear upon the surface. When Jesus himself is dealing with us, especially if it be in a

way of trial, we do not understand it, and he has need to say, "What I do thou knowest not now."

V. Our last thought for the present is this, UPON THIS POINT AND UPON MANY OTHERS WE SHALL ONE DAY BE INFORMED. "What I do thou knowest not now, *but thou shalt know hereafter.*" That "hereafter" may be very soon. Peter knew within a few minutes what Jesus meant, for he said to him, "Know ye what I have done unto you? If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet." Thus the light was not long in breaking. Why are you in such a hurry when you are in trouble to begin spelling out a naughty reason for God's dealings, when, if you will but wait, you shall know the right reason in a short time? A child is in an ill temper because there has been a rule made by the father and not explained, and so it sits down and sulks, and thinks of some unkind, ungenerous motive on the father's part. In a minute or two after it understands it all, and has to eat its own words, and confess, "How bad of me to impute such unkindness to my dear loving father, who is always seeking my good." If you will get reasoning in haste about your Lord's dispensations, you will have to take all your reasonings back, and you will have to afflict your soul for being so hasty; therefore wait awhile, for "thou shalt know hereafter," and that "hereafter" may be very near.

Peter understood his Master's washing his feet better after his sad fall and threefold denial. I should not wonder that when the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and he went out and wept bitterly, the penitent disciple said to himself, "Now I begin to see why my Lord washed my feet." When he perceived how sadly he needed washing, he would prize the token which his Lord had given him. He saw his own frailties and imperfections as he had not seen them before, for he had said, "Though all men should be offended, yet will I never be offended"; but after his sad denial he knew himself to be as apt to err as the rest of the brotherhood. At a certain point of your experience you will possibly discover the explanation of your present adversity.

After the Lord had met with Peter at the sea and had said to him, "Feed my sheep," and "Feed my lambs," another method of explanation was open to him. When Peter began to be a pastor and to deal with the souls of others, he would clearly see why his Master washed his feet, for he would find that he had much to do of the same kind of service. Often does our work for Jesus unfold the work of Jesus, and we know our Lord by being called to follow in his steps.

Yonder in heaven, best of all, Peter understands why the Master washed his feet, and surely sometimes Peter must inwardly smile to think of what he once thought and said. Peter sings amid the heavenly throng, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood," and then he thinks to himself, "In my folly in the days of my flesh I said unto him, 'Thou shalt never wash my feet.' I loved him when I said it, but what monstrous folly lay in my speech." Ah, he understands it now, and we shall understand as he does soon. All things will be clear when we once pass into the region of light. I anticipate the blessed confidences of heaven. How blessed will be those familiar relations of mysteries so long obscure! What sweet communications

there will be between God and his people in the world to come. I look forward to the time when we shall see the knots untied and the riddles all explained : then shall we see the good of apparent evil, and the life which lay in the bosom of death. Could we hear the stories of pilgrims who have reached home they would run like this—"I was travelling a pleasant road, blessing God for so delightful a pilgrimage, but suddenly a huge rock fell across my path, and I had with regret to turn back and traverse a more rugged road. I never understood why until I came home to heaven, and now he tells me, 'Child, there was a precipice but a little way in front, and you would have been dashed to pieces, and therefore I blocked up your way.'" Another who has reached the desired haven will tell us, "The vessel in which I sailed was wrecked ; she struck upon a rock, and on a broken fragment of her timbers I swam to shore. I could never comprehend the reason for this calamity till now, but now I learn that the barque was being steered by crafty hands to a shore whereon I should have been made a slave and kept in lifelong captivity, and there was no way of deliverance but by dashing the bark to shivers, and landing her passengers where they would be free."

Brethren, you will, probably, bless God in heaven more for your sorrows than your joys. When you once ascend the celestial hills you will see that the best blessings came to you in the roughest garments ; your pearls were found in oyster-shells, and your jewels were brought out of Egypt. Sickness, trial, adversity, bereavement, and pain have been more truly angels of God to you than your wealth, your health, your strength, your comfort, infinitely more so than your laughter and your ease. O brothers and sisters, we shall know hereafter. Well, as we shall know hereafter, we may leave the knowing till then, and give all our attention to the obeying and the trusting.

I have done when I have added a warning to those out of Christ. There are some in this congregation who do not know my Lord. I have been much exercised in my mind about you while I have been confined to my chamber and unable to address you, and my prayer has been that the Holy Spirit would bless to your conversion the messages of my brethren who have kindly occupied this pulpit. If you still remain unconverted, I would like to say to you that you do not know what God has been doing with you, and you do not know what he is doing with you now ; but you will know hereafter. You have Sabbath days, but you do not know their value : you will value them differently by-and-by when you lie dying, and especially when you are called before the judgment seat of God. You have your Bible, and you neglect it ; you do not know that God has sent a love letter to you in that form ; you will know it when you stand before his awful bar. Some of you have been pleaded with very often, and earnestly entreated to lay hold on eternal life ; and the Lord has backed up our entreaties by sending sickness to you and personal trouble. Well, you have not known much about it, and you have not wished to know, but you will have to know hereafter. If you die without Christ you will wake up in eternity and cry, " Ah me, that ever the Lord should call me and I refuse, that he should stretch out his hand and I should disregard." In hell it will be an awful discovery, " I was the subject of gospel invitations, I was the object of earnest entreaties, but I continued in my sin, and here I am

eternally lost." What I earnestly desire should happen would be that you should this morning find out what the Lord has done for you, and should understand it, and should open your eyes and say, "Here am I, a man who has lived long in sin, and I have been spared on purpose that God might save me ere I die." Or perhaps it will take this form: "Here I am, a young man, and I came in here this morning with no precise motive, little knowing what God was about to do with me, but I know it now; he has brought me hither that I may, this morning, believe in Jesus, and give my heart to him." O hearers of the gospel, if you once come to know what God has really done with you and for you, you will hardly forgive yourselves for your conduct towards him; you will say, "Did he really love me so, and redeem me with such a price, and have I been so unkind and thoughtless towards him?" You will upbraid yourselves and chasten yourselves, and grieve to think you should have treated so good a friend so ill. O may the divine Spirit this morning open your eyes to know what the Lord Jesus does unto you, and his grace shall be magnified in you. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xiii. 1—17.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—327, 689, 778.

MR. SPURGEON requests his friends to unite with him in thanking the ever merciful Father for permitting him again to leave the bed of sickness and preach the word to the great congregation. He also entreats his kind readers to pray for him whenever the sermons are useful to themselves, for the preacher growingly needs to be upheld by grace in answer to the supplications of the Lord's people. Pray that affliction may be sanctified, physical strength given to preach the gospel, and, above all, the unction of the Holy Ghost, to make the word effectual in the hearts of saints and sinners.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE ANCHOR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 21ST, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."—Hebrews vi. 17—20.

FAITH is the divinely-appointed way of receiving the blessings of grace. "He that believeth shall be saved," is one of the main declarations of the gospel. The wonders of creation, the discoveries of revelation, and the movements of providence are all intended to create and foster the principle of faith in the living God. If God reveals aught it is that we should believe it. Of all the books of Holy Scripture it may be said, "these are written that ye might believe, and that believing ye might have life." Even if God conceals anything, it is that we may be able to confide in him; since what we know yields but little space for trust compared with the unknown. Providence sends us divers trials, all meant to exercise and increase our faith, and at the same time in answer to prayer it brings us varied proofs of the divine faithfulness which serve as refreshments to our faith. Thus the works and the words of God co-operate to educate men in the grace of faith. You might imagine, however, from the doctrine of certain teachers that the gospel was "Who-soever doubts shall be saved," and that nothing could be more useful or honourable than for a man's mind to hang in perpetual suspense, sure of nothing, confident of the truth of no one, not even of God himself. The Bible raises a mausoleum to the memory of its heroes, and writes upon it as their epitaph "these all died in faith"; but the modern gospel derides faith, and sets up instead thereof the new virtue of keeping abreast with the freshest thought of the age. That simple trust in the truthfulness of God's word, which our fathers inculcated as the basis of all religion, would seem to be at a discount now with "men of mind" who are able to cope with "modern thought." Shame upon professed ministers of

Christ that some of these are worshipping at this shrine, and are labouring after the repute of being intellectual and philosophical by scattering doubts on all sides. The doctrine of the blessedness of doubt is as opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ as darkness is to light, or Satan to Christ himself; it is invented as a quietus to the consciences of those proud men who refuse to yield their minds to the rule of God.

Have faith in God, for faith is in itself a virtue of the highest order. No virtue is more truly excellent than the simple confidence in the Eternal which a man is helped to exhibit by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Nay, not only is faith a virtue in itself, but it is the mother of all virtues. He that believeth becomes strong to labour, patient to suffer, fervent to love, earnest to obey, zealous to serve. Faith is a root from which may grow all that can adorn the human character. So far from being opposed to good works, it is the ever-flowing fountain from whence they proceed. Take faith away from the professed Christian and you have cut the sinew of his strength, like Samson you have shorn him of his locks, and left him with no power either to defend himself or to conquer his foes. "The just shall live by faith,"—faith is essential to the vitality of Christianity, and any thing which weakens that faith weakens the very mainspring of spiritual power. Brethren, not only does our own experience teach us this, and the word of God declare it, but the whole of human history goes to show the same truth. Faith is force. Why, even when men have been mistaken, if they have believed the mistake they have displayed more power than men who have known the truth, but have not heartily believed it; for the force that a man hath in dealing with his fellow men lies very much in the force of conviction which his beliefs have over his own soul. Teach a man the truth so that his whole heart believes in it, and you have given him both the fulcrum and the lever with which he may move the world. To this very moment the whole earth is tremulous like a mass of jelly beneath the tread of Luther, and why? Because he was strong in faith. Luther was a living believer, and the schoolmen with whom he had to contend were mere disputers, and the priests, and cardinals, and popes with whom he came into contact were mere traders in dead traditions, therefore he smote them hip and thigh, with great slaughter. His whole manhood believed in what he had learned of God, and as an iron rod amongst potters' vessels, so was he among the pretenders of his age. What has been true in history all along is most certainly true now. It is by believing that we become strong: that is clear enough. Whatever supposed excellencies there may be in the much vaunted receptive condition of the mind, the equilibrium of a cultured intellect, and the unsettled judgment of "honest" disbelief, I am unable to discern them, and I see no reference to them in Scripture. Holy writ neither offers commendations of unbelief nor presents motives nor reasons for its cultivation. Experience does not prove it to be strength in life's battle, or wisdom for life's labyrinth. It is near akin to credulity, and unlike true faith, it is prone to be led by the nose by any falsehood. Unbelief yields no consolation for the present, and its outlook for the future is by no means comforting. We discover no intimation of a sublime cloud-land, where men of self-appreciating brain-power will eternally puzzle themselves and others: we hear no prophecy of a celestial hall of science where sceptics may weave

fresh sophistries, and forge new objections to the revelation of God. *There is a place for the unbelieving, but it is not heaven.*

Coming to our text, whose tone is far removed from all uncertainty, we see clearly that the Lord does not desire us to be in an unsettled condition, but would put an end to all uncertainty and questioning. As among men a fact is established when an honest man has sworn to it, so "God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his covenant, confirmed it by an oath." Condescending to the weakness of human faith, he himself swears to what he declares, and thus gives us a gospel doubly certified by the promise and oath of the everlasting God. Surely angels must have wondered when God lifted his hand to heaven to swear to what he had promised, and must have concluded that thenceforth there would be an end of all strife, because of the confirmation which the Lord thus gave to his covenant.

In working out our text, I must direct you to its most conspicuous metaphor. This world is like a sea, restless, unstable, dangerous, never at one stay. Human affairs may be compared to waves driven with the wind and tossed. As for ourselves, we are the ships which go upon the sea, and are subject to its changes and motions. We are apt to be drifted by currents, driven by winds, and tossed with tempests: we have not yet come to the true *terra firma*, the rest which remaineth for the people of God; God would not have us carried about with every wind, and therefore he has been pleased to fashion for us an anchor of hope most sure and steadfast, so that we may outride the storm. I shall not attempt to preach from the whole of the great text before us, for it would require seven years at least, and a Dr. John Owen, or a Joseph Caryl to bring forth a tithe of its meaning. I am simply going to work out the one set of truths suggested by the image of an anchor, and may God grant that all of us this morning who know the meaning of that anchor may feel it holding us fast by its grip within the veil; and may others, who have never possessed that anchor before, be enabled to cast it overboard this morning for the first time, and feel throughout all the rest of their lives the strong consolation which such a holdfast is sure to bestow upon the believing heart.

I. First, let me call your attention to THE DESIGN OF THE ANCHOR of which our text speaks.

The design of an anchor, of course, is to hold the vessel firmly to one place when winds and currents would otherwise remove it. God has given us certain truths, which are intended to hold our minds fast to truth, holiness, perseverance—in a word, to hold us to himself. But why hold the vessel? The first answer which would suggest itself would be *to keep it from being wrecked*. The ship may not need an anchor in calm waters; when upon a broad ocean a little drifting may not be a very serious matter: but there are conditions of weather in which an anchor becomes altogether essential. When a gale is rushing towards the shore, blowing great guns, and the vessel cannot hold her course, but must surely be driven upon an iron-bound coast, then the anchor is worth its weight in gold. If the good ship cannot be anchored there will be nothing left of her in a very short time but here and there a spar; the gallant vessel will go to pieces, and every mariner be drowned; now is the time to let down the anchor, the best bower anchor if you will, and let the good

ship defy the wind. Our God does not intend his people to be shipwrecked; shipwrecked and lost, however, they would be if they were not held fast in the hour of temptation. Brethren, if every wind of doctrine whirled you about at its will you would soon be drifted far away from the truth as it is in Jesus, and concerning it you would make shipwreck; but you cost your Lord too dear for him to lose you; he bought you at too great a price, and sets too great a store by you for him to see you broken to pieces on the rocks; therefore he has provided for you a glorious holdfast, that when Satan's temptations, your own corruptions, and the trials of the world assail you, hope may be the anchor of your soul, both sure and steadfast. How much we need it! For we see others fall into the error of the wicked, overcome by the deceivableness of unrighteousness, and left for ever as castaways. "Having no hope and without God in the world." If you have done business on the great waters for any length of time, you must be well aware that were it not for everlasting truths which hold you fast, your soul had long since been hurried into everlasting darkness, and the proud waters had long ere this have gone over your soul. When the mighty waves have lifted up themselves, your poor bark has seemed to go down to the bottom of the mountains, and had it not been for unchanging love and immutable faithfulness, your heart had utterly fainted. Nevertheless, here you are to-day, convoyed by grace, provisioned by mercy, steered by heavenly wisdom, and propelled by celestial power. Thanks to the anchor, or rather to the God who gave it to you, no storm has overwhelmed you; you are under way for the port of glory.

An anchor is also wanted *to keep a vessel from discomfort*, for even if it be not wrecked it would be a wretched thing to be driven hither and thither, to the north and then to the south, as winds may shift. Unhappy is he who is the creature of external influences, flying along like thistledown in the breeze, or a rolling thing before the whirlwind. We require an anchor to hold us so that we may abide in peace, and find rest unto our souls. Blessed be God, there are solid and sure truths infallibly certified to us, which operate powerfully upon the mind so as to prevent its being harassed and dismayed. The text speaks of "strong consolation." Is not that a glorious word,—we have not merely consolation which will hold us fast and bear us up against the tempest in times of trouble, but *strong* consolation so that when affliction bursts forth with unusual strength, like a furious tornado, the strong consolation, like a sheet anchor, may be more than a match for the strong temptation, and may enable us to triumph over all. Very restful is that man who is very believing.

"Hallelujah! I believe!
Now the giddy world stands fast,
For my soul has found an anchor
Till the night of storm is past."

An anchor is wanted, too, *to preserve us from losing the headway which we have made*. The vessel has been making good way towards port, but the wind changes and blows in her teeth: she will be borne back to the port from which she started, or to an equally undesirable point, unless she can resist the foul wind; therefore, she puts down her

anchor. The captain says to himself, "I have got so far and I am not going to be drifted back. Down goes my anchor, and here I stop." Saints are sometimes tempted to return to the country whence they came out, they are half inclined to renounce the things which they have learned, and to conclude that they never were taught of the Lord at all. Alas, old Adam plucks us back, and the devil endeavours to drive us back, and were it not for something sure to hold to, back we should go. If it could be proved to be, as certain cultivated teachers would have us believe, that there is nothing very sure, that although black is black it is not very black, and though white is white it is not very white, and from certain standpoints no doubt black is white and white is black; if it could be proved, I say, that there are no eternal verities, no divine certainties, no infallible truths, then might we willingly surrender what we know or think we know, and wander about on the ocean of speculation, the waifs and strays of mere opinion: but while we have the truth, taught to our very souls by the Holy Ghost, we cannot drift from it, nor will we though men count us fools for our steadfastness. Brethren, aspire not to the charity which grows out of uncertainty; there are saving truths and there are "damnable heresies"; Jesus Christ is not yea and nay; his gospel is not a cunning mixture of the gall of hell and the honey of heaven, flavoured to the taste of bad and good. There are fixed principles and revealed facts. Those who know anything experimentally about divine things have cast their anchor down, and as they heard the chain running out, they joyfully said, "This I know, and have believed. In this truth I stand fast and immovable. Blow winds and crack your cheeks, you will never move me from this anchorage: whatsoever I have attained by the teaching of the Spirit, I will hold fast as long as I live."

Moreover, the anchor is needed *that we may possess constancy and usefulness*. The man who is easily moved and believeth this to-day and that to-morrow, is a fickle creature. Who knows where to find him? Of what use is he to the younger sort and the feeble folk, or indeed to any one else? Like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed, what service can he render in the work of the Lord, and how can he influence others for good? He believes not, how can he make others believe? I believe that the orthodox disbeliever is more largely a creator of infidelity than the heterodox believer: in other words, I fear that the man who earnestly believes an error has a less injurious influence upon others than the man who holds the truth in indifference, and secret unbelief: this man is tolerated in godly company, for he professes to be one of ourselves, and he is therefore able to stab at piety beneath her shield. The man knows nothing, certainly, but only hopes and trusts, and when defending truth he allows that much may be said on the other side, so that he kisses and stabs at the same time.

Our God has provided us an anchor to hold us fast lest we be shipwrecked, lest we be unhappy, lest we lose the progress we have made, and lest our character should become unstable, and therefore useless. These purposes are kind and wise; let us bless the Lord who has so graciously cared for us.

II. Secondly, I invite you to consider THE MAKE OF THE ANCHOR

—"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation."

Anchor-making is very important work. The anchor-smith has a very responsible business, for if he makes his anchor badly, or of weak material, woe to the shipmaster when the storm comes on. Anchors are not made of cast iron, nor of every kind of metal that comes to hand, but they are made of wrought iron, strongly welded, and of tough, compact material, which will bear all the strain that is likely to come upon it at the worst of times. If anything in this world should be strong it should be an anchor, for upon it safety and life often depend.

What is our anchor? It has two great blades or flukes to it, each of which acts as a holdfast. It is made of two *divine things*. The one is God's *promise*, a sure and stable thing indeed. We are very ready to take a good man's promise, but perhaps the good man may forget to fulfil it, or be unable to do so: neither of these things can occur with the Lord, he cannot forget and he cannot fail to do as he has said. Jehovah's promise, what a certain thing it must be! If you had nothing but the Lord's bare word to trust to surely your faith should never stagger. To this sure word is added another divine thing, namely, God's *oath*. Beloved, I scarcely dare speak upon this sacred topic. God's oath, his solemn assertion, his swearing by himself! Conceive the majesty, the awe, the certainty of this! Here, then, are two divine assurances, which like the flukes of the anchor hold us fast. Who dares to doubt the promise of God? Who can have the audacity to distrust his oath?

We have for our anchor two things, which, in addition to their being divine, are expressly said to be *immutable*—that is, two things which cannot change. When the Lord utters a promise he never runs back from it—"the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Hath he said and shall he not do it? Hath he promised and shall it not stand fast? He changeth never, and his promise abideth from generation to generation. Then comes the oath, which is the other immutable thing; how could that be altered? God has pledged the honour of his name, and it is not supposable that, under such circumstances, he will retract his engagements and deny his own declarations. Ah, no—

"The gospel bears my spirit up.
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope
In oaths, and promises, and blood."

Notice next of these two things that is said—"Wherein it is impossible for God to lie." It is inconsistent with the very idea and thought of God that he should be a liar. A lying God would be a solecism in language, a self-evident contradiction. It cannot be, God must be true, true in his nature, true in his thoughts, true in his designs, true in his acts, and assuredly true in his promises and true in his oath. "Wherein it is impossible for God to lie." Oh, beloved, what blessed holdfasts have we here! If hope cannot rest on such assurances what could it rest upon?

But now, what is this promise, and what is this oath? The promise
promise given to Abraham that his seed should be blessed, and

in this seed should all nations of the earth be blessed also. To whom was this promise made? Who are the "seed"? In the first place, the seed is Jesus, who blesses all nations; and next, our apostle has proved that this promise was not made to the seed according to the flesh, but to the seed according to the spirit. Who, then, are the seed of Abraham according to the spirit? Why, believers; for he is the father of the faithful, and God's promise, therefore, is confirmed to all who exhibit the faith of believing Abraham. To Christ himself, and to all who are in Christ, is the covenant made sure, that the Lord will bless them for ever and make them blessings.

And what is the oath? That may refer to the oath which the Lord swore to Abraham after the patriarch had offered up his son, for which see the twenty-second chapter of Genesis: but I think you will agree with me if I say it more probably refers to the oath recorded in the one hundred and tenth Psalm, which I would have you notice very carefully,—“The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” I think this is referred to, because the twentieth verse of our text goes on to say, “Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” Now, beloved, I want you to see this anchor. Here is one of its hold-fasts,—God has promised to bless the faithful, he has declared that the seed of Abraham, namely believers, shall be blessed, and made a blessing. Then comes the other arm of the anchor, which is equally strong to hold the soul, namely, the oath of the priesthood, by which the Lord Jesus is declared to be a priest for ever on our behalf; not an ordinary priest after the manner of Aaron, beginning and ending a temporary priesthood, but without beginning of days or end of years, living on for ever; a priest who has finished his sacrificial work, has gone in within the veil, and sits down for ever at the right hand of God, because his work is complete, and his priesthood abides in its eternal efficacy. This is a blessed anchor to the soul: to know that my Priest is within the veil; my King of righteousness and King of peace is before the throne of God for me, representing me, and therefore I am in him for ever secure. What better anchor could the Comforter himself devise for his people? What stronger consolation can the heirs of promise desire?

III. We have no time to linger, though tempted to do so, and therefore I ask you to advance in the third place to notice OUR HOLD OF THE ANCHOR. It would be of no use for us to have an anchor, however good, unless we had a hold of it. The anchor may be sure, and may have a steadfast grip, but there must be a strong cable to connect the anchor with the ship. Formerly it was very general to use a hempen cable, but large vessels are not content to run the risk of breakage, and therefore they use a chain cable for the anchor. It is a grand thing to have a solid substantial connection between your soul and your hope; to have a confidence which is surely your own, from which you can never be separated.

Our text speaks plainly about this laying hold of the anchor in the end of the 18th verse—“That we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” We must personally lay hold on the hope; there is the hope, but we are bound to

grasp it and hold it fast. As with an anchor the cable must pass through the ring, and so be bound to it, so must faith lay hold upon the hope of eternal life. The original Greek signifies "to lay hold by main force and so to hold as not to lose our hold when the greatest force would pull it from us." We must take firm hold of firm truth. Ah, brethren, as some men have a cloudy hope, so they would seem to have a very doubtful way of laying hold upon it: I suppose it is natural it should be so. For my part, I desire to be taught something certain, and then I pray to be certain that I have learned it. Oh to get such a grip of truth as that old warrior had of his sword, so that when he fought and conquered he could not separate his hand and his sword, for his hand clave to his sword as if it were glued to it. It is a blessed thing to get hold of the doctrine of Christ in such a way that you would have to be dismembered before it could be taken from you, for it has grown into your very self. Mind you have a sure hold of your sure anchor.

"Well," saith one, "but *may we* lay hold upon it?" My answer is, the text says it is "set before us,"—to "lay hold of the hope set before us." You may grasp it for it is set before you. If any of you were very faint and hungry, and you came to a person's house, and he said "sit down," and you sat down at the table, and when you sat there the master set before you a good joint of meat and some very pleasant fruits, and the like, you would not long question whether you might eat them, but would infer your liberty to do so because the food was set before you. Assuredly this is the welcome of the gospel. The hope is set before you. For what purpose is it so set? That you may turn your back upon it? Assuredly not. Lay hold upon it, for wherever truth is met with it is both our duty and our privilege to lay hold upon it. All the warrant that a sinner wants for laying hold on Christ is found in the fact that God has set Christ forth to be a propitiation for our sins. Christian man you are in a storm; here is an anchor. Do you ask "May I use that anchor?" It is set before you for that very purpose. I warrant you there is no captain here but what if he were in a storm, and saw an anchor set before him, he would use it at once and ask no questions. The anchor might be none of his, it might happen to be on board as a piece of merchandise; he would not care an atom about that. "The ship has got to be saved. Here is an anchor; over it goes." Act thus with the gracious hope which God provides for you in the gospel of Jesus Christ: lay hold on it now and evermore.

Now, notice that our hold on the anchor should be a present thing and a conscious matter, for we read, "*which hope we have.*" We are conscious that we have it. No one among us has any right to be at peace if he does not know that he has obtained a good hope through grace. May you all be able to say, "*which hope we have.*"

As it is well to have a cable made of the same metal as the anchor, so it is a blessed thing when our faith is of the same divine character as the truth upon which it lays hold: it needs a God-given hope on our part to seize the God-given promise of which our hope is made. The right mode of procedure is to grasp God's promise with a God-created confidence: then you see that right away down from the vessel to the anchor the holdfast is all of a piece, so that at every point it is equally adapted to

bear the strain. O to have precious faith in a precious Christ! A precious confidence in precious blood. God grant it to you, and may you exercise it at this very moment.

IV. Fourthly, and very briefly, let us speak of THE ANCHOR'S HOLD OF US. A ship has hold upon her anchor by her chain cable, but at the same time the most important thing is that the anchor keeps its hold upon the ship; and so, because it has entered into the ground of the sea bottom, holds the vessel hard and fast. Brethren, do you know anything about your hope holding you? It will hold you if it is a good hope; you will not be able to get away from it, but under temptation and depression of spirit, and under trial and affliction, you will not only hold your hope—that is your duty, but your hope will hold you—that is your privilege. When the devil tempts you to say, "I will give it all up," a power unseen will speak out of the infinite deeps, and will reply, "But I shall not give you up, I have a hold of you, and none shall separate us." Brethren, our security depends far more upon God's holding us than our holding to him. Our hope in God that he will fulfil his oath and promise has a mighty power over us, far more than equal to all the efforts of the world, the flesh, and the devil to drag us away.

How is it that our divine anchor holds so fast? It is because it is in its own nature *sure*—"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast." It is in itself sure as to its nature. The gospel is no cunningly devised fable: God has spoken it, it is a mass of fact, it is pure, unalloyed truth, with the broad seal of God himself set upon it. Then, too, this anchor is "stedfast" as to its hold, it never moves from its lodgment. It is sure in its nature, and stedfast when in use, and thus it is practically safe. If you have believed in Christ unto eternal life, and are expecting that God will be as good as his word, have you not found that your hope sustains you and maintains you in your position?

Brethren, the result of the use of this anchor will be very comfortable to you. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast." It will not prevent your being tossed about, for a ship at anchor may rock a good deal, and the passengers may be very sea-sick, but she cannot be driven away from her moorings. There she is, and her passengers suffer discomfort, but they shall not suffer shipwreck. A good hope through grace will not altogether deliver you from inward conflicts, nay, it will even involve them: it will not screen you from outward trials, it will be sure to bring them: but it will save you from all real peril. I may say to every believer in Jesus, that his condition is very like that of the landsman on board ship when the sea was rather rough, and he said, "Captain, we are in great danger, are we not"? As an answer did not come, he said, "Captain, don't you see great fear?" Then the old seaman gruffly replied, "Yes, I see plenty of fear, but not a bit of danger." It is often so with us; when the winds are out and the storms are raging there is plenty of fear, but there is no danger. We may be much tossed, but we are quite safe, for we have an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, which will not start.

One blessed thing is that our hope has such a grip of us that we know it. In a vessel you feel the pull of the anchor, and the more the wind rages the more you feel that the anchor holds you. Like the boy with

his kite : the kite is up in the clouds, where he cannot see it, but he knows it is there, for he feels it pull; so our good hope has gone up to heaven, and it is pulling and drawing us towards itself. We cannot see our anchor, it would be of no use if we could see it ; its use begins when it is out of sight, but it pulls, and we can feel the heavenly pressure.

V. And now, lastly, and best of all, **THE ANCHOR'S UNSEEN GRIP**, "which entereth into that within the veil." Our anchor is like every other, when it is of any use it is out of sight. When a man sees the anchor it is doing nothing, unless it happen to be some small stream anchor or grapnel in shallow water. When the anchor is of use it is gone : there it went overboard with a splash; far down there, all among the fish, lies the iron holdfast, quite out of sight. Where is your hope, brother? Do you believe because you can see? That is not believing at all. Do you believe because you can feel? That is feeling, it is not believing. But "blessed is he that hath not seen and yet hath believed." Blessed is he who believes against his feelings, ay, and hopes against hope. That is a strange thing to do, hoping against hope, believing things impossible, and seeing things invisible : he who can do that hath learned the art of faith. Our hope is not seen, it lies in the waves, or, as the text says, "within the veil." I am not going to run the figure too closely, but a mariner might say that his anchor is within the watery veil, for a veil of water is between him and it, and so it is concealed. Such is the confidence which we have in God, whom having not seen we love.

"Let the winds blow, and billows roll,
Hope is the anchor of my soul.
But can I by so slight a tie,
An unseen hope, on God rely?
Steadfast and sure, it cannot fail,
It enters deep within the veil,
It fastens on a land unknown,
And moors me to my Father's throne."

Albeit our anchor is gone out of sight, yet thank God it has taken a very firm grip, and "entered into that which is within the veil." What hold can be equal to that which a man hath upon his God when he can cry, "Thou hast promised, therefore do as thou hast said"? What grasp is firmer than this, "Lord, thou hast sworn it, thou canst not run back. Thou hast said that he that believeth in thee is justified from all sin. Lord, I believe thee, therefore be pleased to do as thou hast said. I know thou canst not lie, and thou hast sworn that Christ is a priest for ever, and I am resting in him as my priest who has made a full atonement for me. I therefore, pledge thee to thine oath, accept me for the sake of Jesus' sacrifice. Canst thou reject a soul for whom thine own Son is pleading? He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for me : my Lord, this is the hold I have upon thee, this is the anchor which I have cast into the deep, mysterious attributes of thy wondrous nature. I believe thee, and thou wilt not make me ashamed of my hope." Oh, brethren, what a hold you have upon the living God when you rely on his oath and promise! Thus you hold him as Jacob held the angel, and the thing you will surely win at his hands.

Note next, that when an anchor has a good grip down below, the more the ship drags the tighter its hold becomes. At first, when the anchor goes down, perhaps, it drops upon a hard rock, and there it cannot bite, but by-and-by it slips off from the rock and enters into the bottom of the sea; it digs into the soil, and, as the cable draws it on, the fluke goes deeper and deeper till the anchor almost buries itself, and the more it is pulled upon the deeper it descends. The anchor gets such a hold at last that it seems to say, "Now, Boreas, blow away, you must tear up the floor of the sea before the vessel shall be let go." Times of trouble send our hope deep down into fundamental truths. Some of you people who have never known affliction, you rich people who never knew want, you healthy folks who were never ill a week, you have not half a grip of the glorious hope that the tried ones have. Much of the unbelief in the Christian Church comes out of the easy lives of professors. When you come to rough it, you need solid gospel. A hard-working hungry man cannot live on your whipped creams and your syllabubs—he must have something solid to nourish him; and so the tried man feels that he must have a gospel which is true, and he must believe it to be true, or else his soul will famish. Now, if God promises and swears, have we not the most solid of assurances? The firmest conceivable faith is no more than the righteous due of the thrice holy and faithful God. Therefore, brethren, when greater trouble comes believe the more firmly, and when your vessel is tossed in deeper water believe the more confidently. When the head is aching, and the heart is palpitating, when all earthly joy is fled, and when death comes near, believe the more. Grow surer and surer yet that your Father cannot lie; yea, "Let God be true and every man a liar." In this way you will obtain the strong consolation which the Lord intends you to enjoy.

The text concludes with this very sweet reflection, that though our hope is out of sight we have a friend in the unseen land where our hope has found its hold. In anxious moments a sailor might almost wish that he could go with his anchor and fix it firmly. That he cannot do, but we have a friend who has gone to see to everything for us. Our anchor is within the veil, it is where we cannot see it, but Jesus is there, and our hope is inseparably connected with his person and work. We know of a certainty that Jesus of Nazareth, after his death and burial, rose from the grave, and that forty days afterwards, in the presence of his disciples, he went up into heaven, and a cloud received him. We know this as an historical fact; and we also know that he rose into the heavens, as the comprehensive seed of Abraham, in whom are found all the faithful. As *he* has gone there *we* shall surely follow, for he is the firstfruits of the full harvest.

According to the text, our Lord Jesus has gone within the veil *as our high priest*. Now, the high priest within the veil is in the place of acceptance on our behalf. A Melchisedec high-priest is one who has boundless power to bless and to save unto the uttermost. Jesus Christ has offered one bloody sacrifice for sin, namely, himself, and now for ever he sits down at the right hand of God, even the Father. Brethren, he reigns where our anchor has entered; we rest in Christ's finished work, his resurrection power, and his eternal kingship. How can we doubt after this?

We are next informed that Jesus has gone within the veil *as a fore-runner*. What is a fore-runner if there be not others to run after him? He has gone to lead the way, he is the pioneer, the leader of the great army, the first fruits from the dead, and if he has gone to heaven as a forerunner, then we who belong to him will follow after. Should not that reflection make our hearts glad?

We are told next that as a fore-runner our Lord has *for us* entered—that is entered to take possession in our name. When Jesus Christ went into heaven he did as it were look around on all the thrones, and all the palms, and all the harps, and all the crowns, and say “I take possession of all these in the name of my redeemed. I am their representative and claim the heavenly places in their name.” As surely as Jesus is there, the possessor of all things, so shall we also each one come to his inheritance in due time.

Our Lord Jesus by his intercession is drawing us to heaven, and we have only to wait a little while and we shall be with him where he is. He pleads for our home-bringing, and it will come to pass ere long. No sailor likes his anchor to come home, for if it does so in a storm matters look very ugly; our anchor will never come home, but it is drawing us home; it is drawing us to itself, not downwards beneath devouring waves, but upwards to ecstatic joys. Do you not feel it? You who are growing old, do you not feel its home drawings? Many cords hold us here, but they are getting fewer with some of you—the dear wife has faded away, or the beloved husband has gone; many of your children have gone too, and a host of friends. These are all helps to draw you upward. I think at this very moment you must feel as if your barque were about to change by some magic power from a ship which floats the waters to an eagle which can fly the air. Have you not often longed to mount while singing

“Oh that we now might grasp our guide!
Oh that the word were given!
Come, Lord of hosts, the waves divide,
And land us all in heaven!”

My cable has grown shorter of late, a great many of its links have vanished, I am nearer my hope than when I first believed. Every day hope nears fruition, let our joy in it become more exultant. A few more weeks or months, and we shall dwell above, and while we shall need no anchor to hold us fast, we shall eternally bless that divine condescension which produced such a holdfast for our unstable minds while tossed upon this sea of care.

What will those of you do who have no anchor? for a storm is coming on. I see the lowering clouds, and hear the distant hurricane. What will you do? May the Lord help you at once to flee for refuge to the hope set before you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews vi.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—230, 193, 632.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

OUR LORD'S HUMANITY A SWEET SOURCE OF COMFORT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me."—Daniel x. 18.

WE are not able, as yet, to bear the full revelation of divine things. If any intellect had been strong enough, if any heart had been pure enough, to see the exceeding glory of the covenant angel, surely Daniel possessed such a head and heart; but even he fell upon his face, and was cast into a dead swoon, for he was unable to bear the sight of the man clothed in linen, whose "body was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning." We ought to be thankful that our God has revealed no more. The word of God is as excellent in its darkness as in its brightness; had it unveiled more, its discoveries would have been no more beneficial, perhaps they had been less profitable. As it is, there is far more within this book than you and I have seen as yet, and we need not wish that more had been written. If we entertain such a desire, our loving Lord may silence us with the words, "I have many things to show unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

It appears from our text that, when weighed down under a sense of the divine presence, the readiest method of consolation is found in the touch of a certain sublime, mysterious, human hand. I know it is very usual to say that the personage who appeared to Daniel was the angel Gabriel, but I cannot bring myself to believe that he is the angel of this chapter. Surely this glorious being was that uncreated messenger of the covenant who, though not born into our nature in Daniel's day, yet took upon himself the similitude of a man for a time, as he had done before when on special occasions he appeared to others of the saints before his actual incarnation. Even if we grant that an angel was the person who touched Daniel, still the truth which I wish to bring out will be none the less clear, namely, that even if an angel should wish to comfort us, he must assume a visible human form, and he must lay upon us a sympathetic hand like our own, so that there

shall be, at any rate, "the appearance of a man," or otherwise we shall not be strengthened. If this be granted as a truth, I shall not insist upon the text immediately referring to Christ, but I shall take the general principle, and say this—that comfort is best brought to men by a man, and if we are to be strengthened, the touch of "one like the appearance of a man" is needed. Thence we may without difficulty rise to the reflection that it is ever to us the richest and highest comfort, as believers in Christ, that the Lord Jesus is a man; and when he strengthens us it is full often by laying his human hand upon us. He reveals his kinship with us, and our spirit is consoled and strengthened by a sense of his union with us. My one object is, by the Spirit's aid, to draw water from the ancient well of our Lord's humanity.

The Son of God is also the Son of man. We none of us doubt his deity, and therefore we shall be able to spend all our time in this sermon in musing upon his manhood, and the joys contained in that truth. Jesus is God; but Jesus was born, Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose again, Jesus is in heaven, *as a man*. He is God and man in one person, but there is no confusion of natures; he is neither a deified man nor a humanized God. His Godhead is altogether Godhead, and his manhood altogether manhood. We must not divide the person, nor confound the natures. He is as truly man as if he were not God, and as truly God as if he had never assumed the nature of man. It is of his manhood that we are now about to speak; we shall not attempt to prove it, but shall simply endeavour to show how the touch of the hand of Jesus, the man, strengthens us.

I. And, first, dear friends, does it not cheer us WHEN WE LABOUR UNDER A SENSE OF LONELINESS?

If we are true to him, we are strangers and sojourners with him, as all our fathers were. Before his cross we find ourselves to be strangers in this land, even as he was; for as the world knew him not so it knoweth us not, and as it placed him without the camp so also does it make aliens of us. It is sweet to feel when walking the separated path, "I am a stranger with thee"—a stranger in the world as thou art, an exile as thou wast. In such solitude the manhood of Jesus is a delicious cordial.

Some feel alone because *they are the only ones of their house who serve the Lord*. How you wish it were otherwise! It is your daily prayer that all your kindred may be followers of Christ, but they are not so; perhaps they openly oppose you, and make your life unhappy through their hard speeches. Well, there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. There is a brother who will hear what you have to say; nay, who knows all that is in your heart before you utter it. He is the antitype of Joseph, and he knows what it is to be separated from his brethren. Of all that ever lived he was the loneliest by far, and therefore he sympathises with the forsaken ones.

The child of God as he grows in grace becomes more lonely under certain aspects, just as the higher mountains have fewer familiars, till Mont Blanc speaks to no equal in his awful height, but communes with himself apart. They that serve God much, and well, and draw near to his innermost presence, in that proportion draw away from men, as to deriving comfort from them. But, oh, there are no heights to which Jesus has not risen, no attainments which he has not surpassed. Thai

glorious man is with you, with you in the singleness of heart with which you serve your God, with you in the perfect consecration which the Holy Ghost has given you, with you in the intimate fellowship of your soul with the Eternal Father. In your highest flight of ecstasy there is still a man at your right hand, saying, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God."

It falls to the lot of some Christians to stand alone *in their contention for the faith*. Mayhap there is made known to them what has not been revealed to others, or which, being revealed, others have refused to see, or seeing have been afraid to declare. In such cases true-hearted men find themselves standing very much alone, at least for a time. They have a treasure which others do not prize, and they are bound to show it, for to this end was the treasure placed in their earthen vessel. God has not committed it to them for themselves alone, but he has put them in trust with the gospel for the good of others, and they must speak it out. If when they do so they hear no sympathetic answer, but are met in the spirit of controversy and unkind rebuke, it is blessed for them to know that "the faithful and true witness" is the champion of every honest testimony.

He stood alone as our atoning sacrifice, and into that loneliness we never intrude, but *in all other work he is our companion*, even he who is called "the man Christ Jesus," and therefore we shall be cheered by his presence if we find ourselves without earthly helpers. Oh, if we had our choice between having an angel to live in our house always, and to know our secrets, or to have the man Christ Jesus to be our constant friend, we should not deliberate in our choice, but choose our Lord's company at once. An angel would often afflict us; we should be afraid to confess our littlenesses to him, we should fear that he would think them meannesses. His unsuffering nature we should suspect of contempt, and we should be ill at ease in his presence; but such a feeling as that does not cross our mind when we have to deal with one who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We know our Lord to be true man, and therefore we speak to him with familiarity, and make him our bosom's dearest companion. Lonely one, take care that thou have no secrets apart from Jesus. Love thy loneliness rather than seek to escape from it, if it bring thee nearer to *him*. Thou wilt do well to be always ready for Christian fellowship, ay, and to seek it; but do not live on it, for fellowship with Jesus is sweeter than fellowship with saints. I know that fellowship with saints is poor stuff if it come not through fellowship with the saints' Master. When communion comes from *his* hand, and we come to the feast in *his* company, then every brother who sits at the table adds to our enjoyment, but if we approach the table to see *them*, and forget *him*, then every brother adds to our discomfort, and forms another veil to hide the Lord. Cling to the Christ of the garden and the cross, and find, O lone one, thy sweetest joy in the thought that he is a man such as thou art. Sing thou with me those sweet lines,—

"When gathering clouds around I view,
And days are dark and friends are few,
On him I lean, who not in vain
Experienced every human pain.
He sees my wants, allays my fears,
And counts and treasures up my tears."

II. How sweet it is to feel the touch of the humanity of Christ WHEN WE ARE HUMBLLED IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

I know not, brethren, whether you are often favoured to behold the outshinings of the divine glory, and to feel the inlettings of it into your own soul. This I do know: if you are so, you find it a wearing and breaking joy. If we had more of it, it might be a destroying delight, for "even our God is a consuming fire;" and when we come nearest to him, and best understand that he is love, the glory of that love overcomes us. We cannot eat much honey, neither can we endure much sensible enjoyment of the divine glory; I mean much comparatively, for of course it is much to us, but it is not much compared with what he could reveal if we were able to endure it. Have you ever felt what it is to be as if you were not, to see your comeliness turned into corruption, your excellency all despoiled, and yourself not only lying low in the presence of God, but being as if you had no being at all, as if you had no separate existence in the presence of such wondrous majesty, such awe-inspiring love? You feel no dread, far from it, and no unhappiness, but the very reverse: yet you yourself seem gone, and God is all in all. A blessed extinction of self makes room for infinite love. There is not one covenant blessing but what, if we understood it, would have this humbling effect upon us. Every gift which God bestows upon his chosen, if rightly understood and truly grasped, would make us say with Abraham, "I, that am but dust and ashes;" or make us sit down with David and exclaim, "Whence is this to me? Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" Now, at such times of self-annihilation it is strengthening to the mind, which is almost ready to expire beneath the load of heavenly glory, to feel the touch of that hand, and to perceive that he who is our God is also very near unto us. It is bliss to me to perceive that the Creator has become one with the creature, for Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem. Jesus ate, and drank, and slept, and wept, and bled, and died, and now he sits at the right hand of the Father; and so, notwithstanding the awe which crushes me, I see an infinite condescension—nay, I perceive a near kinship, which draws me close to God himself; so that I say, "My Father," and with the next breath, "My Brother, my Friend, my Husband, my Best-Beloved." I wonder what we should have done if we had known so much of God, and had not known Christ! I suppose I am speaking paradoxically, and saying what I should not say, for we never could have known God except in Jesus Christ in such a way as we do know him: but if such a thing had been possible, it must have been destructive to us. But now, God in Jesus Christ, how blessed! God out of Christ we know nothing of, nor need we. Luther used to say, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." Beware of attempting to deal with God apart from the Mediator, for no man cometh unto the Father but through his Son, Christ Jesus.

Thus have we felt the touch of the human hand strengthening us when we have fallen prostrate under a deep sense of the glory of God.

III. Thirdly, brethren and sisters, for here, perhaps, you sisters take precedence of us—IN SORROW, oh, how blessed it is to feel the touch of the man's hand!

Pain of body is the portion of many of God's people. They are seldom

long without it. Weakness, constant weakness, keeps many of God's precious ones tied to the bedchamber or to the house, and often the beloved means of grace are taken from them because of their inability to come up to the assembly of God's saints. Others endure the affliction of poverty: with all their economy and industry they find it difficult to provide things honest in the sight of all men. Some true Christians are naturally of a sombre temperament, and to them even summer weather has a wintry aspect. The Lord has allotted to each one of his children a cross to carry, and his loving wisdom led him to do so. Those who are for the most part without trial are usually the weakest in the church of God, the least spiritual, the least instructed in experimental truth, and altogether the least grown in divine things. We have our sorrows, but have we not found by actual experience that the choicest consolation for sorrow is the fact that Jesus Christ knows all about it and is with us in it? How often has that verse rung through my soul like a trumpet-note to urge me onward when otherwise I should have retreated from the battle—

"In every pang that rends the heart,
The man of sorrows had a part;
With boldness, therefore, at the throne
Let us make all our sorrows known."

There is no abyss of grief into which Jesus has not descended. Sickness of body and pangs of soul, bereavement, poverty, scorn, slander, desertion, treachery—he knows all these things: malice, envy, contempt, and deadly hate, all shot their fiery darts against him. He has sounded the deeps of the ocean of sorrow. Did he not say that he was exceeding sorrowful even unto death; and did not the sweat of blood which encrimsoned his face show how terrible were the inward agonies through which his soul was passing? Prince of sorrow art thou, O Jesus! Emperor in the realm of woe, art thou, O Christ! Thou couldst say far more truly than the prophet of old, "I am the man that hath seen affliction." Now, brethren and sisters, our bitter cup is sweetened, for his dear lips have touched the brim; nay, he has drained it to its dregs. Now, brethren, our hard sorrow is softened because it is only a piece from that loaf of which he ate the most himself. Well may we be satisfied to go through the valley of tears, for it is "the King's dale," and all along it we can track his footprints: We know them, for they show the marks of the nails! They are the footprints of the Crucified! Comrade with us in every grief and woe, he is always at our side when our hearts are heavy. He carried up to heaven the selfsame human heart which was pierced below, and there he remembers Calvary, and all the griefs he suffered on our behalf. He sympathizes with us still. I delight in that thought of one of our hymn writers, where he says,

"Yet even after death his heart
For us its tribute poured."

After our Lord was dead his heart yielded blood and water for our sakes, so that after death he was still in sympathy with us. Still Jesus gives his heart to his people. Glory be to his name! Who among you will refuse to shoulder your cross now? Did you lay it down just now and say, "I can carry it no longer? I must give up in despair"?

Why, *he* carries the heavier end for you. Put your shoulder to the burden which he consecrates by his fellowship. It will grow light when you think that *he* once carried it. When Alexander's troops were on long marches, that which cheered them was that Alexander always walked as far as they. If they were very thirsty in the broiling sun, and if any water was to be found, of course, they brought it first to Alexander. Should they not first consider their king? But he nobly put the cooling draught on one side, and said, "As long as a sick man needs water, Alexander will go without." This made each warrior strong, for his king fared as he fared. Let this strengthen us to-night. Jesus Christ puts his hand upon us, and says, "Fear not. I am with you in your sorrow. My heart is as your heart; therefore be of good cheer."

IV. I will not dwell long on any one thought, but leave you to dilate upon it. The fact that Jesus Christ is a man, such as we are, should greatly comfort us in ALL OUR STRUGGLES.

It seems hard, this battle of life, this "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saint;" this fighting against sin, this contention against inbred corruption, this warring against spiritual wickedness in high places; and we are apt to think sometimes, "Can we ever win? Is not the battle too difficult?" In such moments look at yonder man who sits upon the throne of God. He is the typical man, the representative to us of what manhood should be, nay, of what through his grace it is. He wrestled hard, as hard as you do, but he won the victory. You are tempted: does that cause you doubt? He was "tempted in all points like as we are," yet he did not sin. Are you distressed by the contentions of godless men? "Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds." The struggle is not so hard with you as it was with him, after all. You have an easier battle to fight, and you have the promise that, as your days, your strength shall be. Now, as he overcame, finding strength enough for his conflict, he is to you a living prophecy of what you shall do through him. Yes, brother, you shall trample sin beneath your foot, you shall take the strongholds of the adversary, and grace shall reign within your heart. The world, the flesh, and the devil, that trinity of evils, shall be overcome by you; you shall be a conqueror, nay, listen! "more than a conqueror through him that loved you."

"As surely as he overcame,
And triumph'd once for you,
So surely you that love his name,
Shall triumph in him too."

"Did a man ever do that?" asked a bold spirit concerning some renowned achievement, "for if one man did it, another man shall." It was a brave speech. But let us apply it to Christ for a moment. Did he, a man, live in the midst of this world amid fierce temptations, and did he come out of that scorching furnace with not so much as the smell of fire upon him? Then the eternal God can work the like in other men, and we may believe, nay, we may be confident, that the victory shall be unto us through the blood of the Lamb. Be of good courage, O sons of men, for the Son of Man has won the victory. Cast

not away your confidence. Let not your swords be laid aside. Jesus, Jesus the representative man, has conquered, and therefore those who are in him, "strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man," shall conquer also. Herein is comfort.

V. Further, brethren, in the fifth place, what a blessed thing it has been to look at the manhood of Jesus Christ AT TIMES WHEN WE HAVE BEEN DECEIVED IN OUR BRETHREN.

Our natural tendency to idolatry tempts us to confide in man. Among religious people there always has been a tendency, much to be deplored, to lean a good deal upon men of eminence—upon ministers, leaders, and men of experience. We get a great deal of good from them, blessed be God, and, therefore, we conceive a high opinion of them, as indeed we may rightly do, if we attribute all that is praiseworthy to the God who gave it. But every now and then we pass beyond the proper confidence which a younger brother may place in an elder, and we pin our faith to the man's sleeve, and make our hope in a measure dependent upon his sincerity. This is the peculiar sin of young Christians; but I have sometimes met with it in simple-hearted persons, even in extreme old age. The "dear minister," the "venerable man of God"—they have looked far too much to him. Alas! there has come a discovery that man is only man, and that some men are not saints, though they talk in a saintly manner. There has been the explosion of a profession, the total casting down of an idol, and the breaking of it to pieces; and at such times the faith of many has been grievously staggered, and even those who are somewhat more established, have nevertheless received a grievous blow. We have seen Judas again, and Demas, and Hymenæus, and Philetus, and old Ahitophel, rising from the dead, and we have been filled with grief. At such times it is most cheering to remember that there is one man who will never deceive us. There is one who has not uttered a promise which he will not fulfil, nor won from us a confidence which he will not more than justify. It is such a blessed thing to see Jesus standing there: honesty, integrity, uprightness, righteousness incarnate; truth his very nature, with no sinister motives or selfish desires to make him subtle for his own gain, but altogether disinterested, living for the glory of God, and the good of his people. To get back into his bosom again, and to nestle there, and to feel—"Child, here is a heart that is ever warm with true love. Thou art safe here"—this is rest indeed. To get back to Jesus and say, "Now am I neither of Paul, nor of Apollos, nor of Cephas, but of Christ." To hear the news of religious strife in this denomination and that, and, amidst the clashing elements of different ecclesiastical parties, to say, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;" and, clinging to Jesus, to feel "But this is not vanity, this is reality, this is truth!" Oh, to keep with Jesus, brethren and sisters!—never to stir away from him, and to feel that the truth which you can trust, the integrity on which you can rely, is embodied in the man Christ Jesus. Is not man the meanest, beggarliest thing in all creation? Do you not feel him to be so when he deceives you? But, then, when you look at Jesus, how manhood rises in your esteem. After all, manhood is capable of something grand and glorious, and you bless the Lord Jesus who has by the sublime perfection of his character redeemed our nature from its frightful degradation.

VI. Again : I hope I shall not weary you. Surely I may continue to draw out the silken threads of such a subject. Children of God will find the doctrine of Christ's humanity to be wonderfully comfortable to them in SEASONS OF DOUBT.

Many of you are free from grievous doubts, and I would be the last to sow them in your minds. I love Cowper's picture of the poor woman with her pillow and bobbins, who only knew her Bible true, and left all the philosophies in the world to those who cared for them. But there is a class of disciples like Thomas, who think much, and are apt to doubt much; they do not love doubts, they hate them, yet their doubts, often go very deep, and undermine the most precious doctrines. The men are really steadfast in the faith, but it costs them many exercises and painful questionings. They ask, "How is this? and why is that?" Perhaps they have more brains than heart. I suppose many of us get into that condition, and, do you know, to me a sight of my Lord is my great security—a sheet-anchor which has held me fast in times of scepticism and doubt. I cannot doubt when I see *him*. When I turn over the book and read his character I find it impossible to be a disbeliever. If any man invented the character of Christ, I will worship him: he must be divine to have created such perfection. It seems to me that if the life of Jesus were not a fact the very fiction would be a creation demanding perfect holiness in the inventor. Who but a perfectly holy being could have conceived a character like that of our Lord and Master? Every other character has its flaw. Man may be likened to a statue I once saw in Cambridge, which I think is in Trinity College library now—a statue of Byron. I remember looking at it from one point of view, and the gentleman who showed it to me said, "There, sir, there is the poet!" Yes, and a noble face it is, full of high thought, and rare imagination; and you admire the man. "Come round to this point," said my conductor, "for there is the man who dared defy the Deity." You could see at once the semi-maniac Byron, lost to all pure and devout emotion. The artist had sketched the duplicate man, the true Byron, a man both great and wicked. Now, if some artist able to exhibit the whole truth could thus set you forth in marble your friends might go to ever so many points, and say, "Beautiful! beautiful! admirable! commendable! lovely!" and so on: but when they came to some one point (and some of us may be very thankful that people do not get to that point generally) they would exclaim, "Alas," and they would not like to say much more. They would feel the conviction that things are not altogether what they seem to be, and that flaws are discoverable in those they most admire. It is not so with Jesus. Survey him, before and behind, on the right and on the left. Come upon him at midnight; look at him in midday. Watch him as a child; see him as a man. Look at him alone; behold him in company. See him in his pomp as he rides through Jerusalem; see him in his shame as they hound him to his death. From every point he is perfect, absolutely perfect: you cannot improve upon him, you cannot hint at a fault in him. This is to candid minds a solid establishment, rendering it hard to be a doubter; and it becomes to believers who love their Lord and Master a blessed chain which holds them fast, so that they cannot give up the truth they have received, for they have not followed cunningly-

devised fables. If Peter and James and John, when they saw their Lord transfigured, were established, so are we also when we view his human life on earth, for his whole career is the transfiguration of humanity: a wonderful display of how poor human nature's garments can be made whiter than any fuller can make them—how the brightness of manhood can excel the glory of the sun at noonday. This consoles us amidst the battle of doubtful thought.

VII. Further, dear brethren, how blessedly the touch of our Redeemer's human hand COMFORTS US IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

Unless the Lord comes, "it is appointed unto all men once to die." In the presence of death and the grave, when we really get to look at them, there is hardly one among us who does not begin to ask himself, "Is it all right?" Must we die? We shrink back; we cannot bear it. "Shall I rise again? If, after my skin, worms devour this body, shall I in my flesh see God? Does it seem likely? Is it possible? Can these dry bones live?" We have read the burial service many times, and heard it read over our friends, and we have thought that we believed in the resurrection; but when it comes to ourselves, and we are about to die, and sickness tells upon us, then we ask the question over again, "Shall we rise? And is it true? Is it surely true?" Often and often have I put myself through my paces over that question, and this is where I always land. I know that the man Christ Jesus rose from the dead. I am sure of that. How do I know it? No fact in human history was ever better attested, or even so well attested as this—that Jesus who was crucified did rise from the dead. The witnesses are so many. Read Paul's summing up of the evidence in the Corinthians. He shows that sometimes Christ was seen by one disciple alone, then by twelve, and, on one occasion, at any rate, by five hundred witnesses at once. Jesus showed himself alive by indisputable proofs: we are sure that he rose from the dead. Well, then, I know that I shall do so; for the apostle, by inspiration, has put the two things together—"If Christ rose not, then is there no resurrection of the dead. But if Christ rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" One man has broken from the prison of the grave, and therefore so will all who are like him. Brethren in the Gaza of mortality, we shall escape from this city, for our Samson rose in the morning, and took away the gates, posts and bars and all, and carried them to the top of the hill. The gates of the grave are open: pass ye through, ye redeemed of the Lord! He has rent away the bars of the sepulchre, it is a dungeon no longer. The tomb is now a bed-chamber wherein you shall sleep a little while, till your body shall be prepared for the Lord's embraces.

"What though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust,
Yet as the Lord our Saviour rose,
So all his followers must."

VIII. Once more. Children of God, the manhood of Christ ought to be a great comfort to you WHEN YOU ARE SEEKING TO DO GOOD AMONG YOUR FELLOW MEN.

This is an awful world this world of human beings. If you ride along

the main streets, London looks to be a very respectable city, but just go down the side streets, and from these turn into the courts and alleys. Enter Jack Ketch's warren, or Tiger Bay. Visit those regions where the means of livelihood are sin, where drunkenness is the chief delight, where debauchery has ceased to be pleasure, and has become an occupation, where every villainy is transacted unblushingly. Oh, God! When we think of what humanity is even where Christianity keeps it within bounds, and then think of what it is when left to itself to bow down before blocks of wood and stone, and offer orgies of vice as the adoration of God, we might justly say, "Oh, it is a foul thing! Let it alone! It scarce deserves pity." If we could but entertain the comfortable notions of the Corinthian brethren, and believe that the world is not to be converted, how easy we might be. We could sit down and care no more for this poor earth, because the Lord Jesus is coming and the thing will end, and there is nothing for us to do but to pull here and there a man off the sinking ship, for the kingdoms of this world are never to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he is never to have dominion from sea to sea, at any rate not by the ordinary method of the proclamation of the gospel, and we may as well go to bed and enjoy ourselves, for effort is needless where success is hopeless. So they tell us, and if I could believe them I could sleep more soundly at nights. But I believe that the world is to be converted to God, and that here on this battle-ground, and by the same weapons with which the fight began, the conflict will be fought out to the glorious end, and sin shall be trodden down by the Lord's people, who will win the victory through his blood. Still look at fallen human nature. Whitefield used to say that it was half beast and half devil. He was very near the mark; but I question whether both beast and devil are not slandered by being compared with man when he is left to himself. Fallen man is a horrible creature, and each one of us may see a specimen in his own natural heart. But, oh, brethren, let us gird up the loins of our minds and be encouraged. Let us look beyond the fall, and see what humanity once was, and what it may yet become. Jesus took human nature upon him, and thereby did it the highest honour: an honour which has more than rolled away its reproach. Though free from sin, yet his nature was human; and in assuming such a nature Jesus showed the store which he set by our race. He thought it worth his while to live, to suffer, to bleed, to die, for such poor things as we have been speaking of. He thought it worth his while to preach to a woman who had had five husbands, and was still living in sin; worth his while to permit his feet to be washed by a woman who had been a sinner; worth his while to mix with tax-gatherers and sinners—the common vulgar people of the great cities, for he was a physician, and he had come to heal the sick.

Never let us give way for a solitary moment to the proud feeling that anybody is below us, or that any human being is so mean that he is not worth looking after, and so bad that it is really of no use to hope to benefit him. "Have I not heard it insinuated with regard to fallen women, "Oh, it is very melancholy work to have to do with them, and probably it would be better to let them alone"? "And these children in the streets," say some, "these waifs and strays—would it not be better to let those

eminent Christian dignitaries, the parochial authorities, instruct them in the poorhouse? Would it not be better to let the grosser evils alone? They are so hideous. Drunkenness, poverty, uncleanness—they so abound in this great city that one runs great risks and undergoes much pollution in coming near them." Very superior beings sometimes talk in this fashion. I mean rather to say that conceited coxcombs thus speak. Is there one being on the face of the earth so degraded that you and I might not have been more degraded still if the Lord's grace had been withheld? Does there live on the face of the earth one incarnation of wickedness that can possibly excel what we might have been if exposed to the same influences and denied the restraints of love? How, then, can we talk of sinners as being beneath us? Jesus Christ stoops indeed, but for you and for me it is almost impossible to stoop, for we are already down so low that we are near to the very lowest, and there is no great stoop possible on our part. This always cheers me. If my Master would give me a house full of convicts who had been imprisoned many times, and given over as hopeless, I should feel great confidence in preaching the gospel to them, because I should think, "Now, I am in the very place in which my Master would have chosen to fix his pulpit." Did he not come to save us, who are convicts, under the law of God? And, if he has done that, let us never despair of the worst of felons. Never despair of a creature for whom Jesus died. Never despair of a creature the like of which you may see by myriads before the eternal throne, singing, "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." City missionary, Bible woman, brother, sister, you who work among the lowest of the low, let the Master's hand touch you and afford you strength.

Now, I have done when I have said a few inviting words to those here present who do not know much of the Redeemer, and have not yet believed in him.

Do you feel yourselves guilty before God? Do you wish for mercy? Come, then, and come directly, for Jesus Christ, a man like yourselves, invites you. Remember, you cannot go to God without a mediator, but you may go to Christ without a mediator: you may go just as you are. You want no introduction to Jesus. I know that you can go and tell another man like yourself your sin, for some are so foolish as to do so. They confess their sins to the priests, as Judas did, but you know Judas then went and hanged himself, which was a very likely thing to do after such a confession. But if you will go and tell your sins to Jesus, who is a man, and something more than a man, he will hear your story, and it will not pollute his ear. He will listen to it, and he will do more; he will absolve you effectually. Have you not felt now that you have grown up to be big fellows, that you wished you were boys again, so that you could go at night and tell mother all that you had done wrong during the day, so that mother might kiss you, and you would go to bed feeling that everything was right again? Well, there is no mortal to whom you can go for such forgiveness now, but the Lord Jesus Christ will be to you all that your mother was to you when you were a child. Go and tell him all about it, and ask him to wash you in his blood, and cover you with his righteousness, and he will forgive you as freely as your own kind mother would have done. Jesus Christ will feel for you, for he

knows all your temptations, and weaknesses. If there is any sort of excuse to be made for you, he will make it : he did that for his murderers when he said, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." For that which cannot be extenuated at all he has something a great deal better than an excuse—namely, his own atoning sacrifice. He will tell you, " Simply trust me, and I will save you." Do not be afraid to come and tell him all your case. He will not spurn you. Did he ever spurn a sinner yet ? The dogs eat of the crumbs under his table, and he never drives them away. Dog of a sinner, you may come to his feet, and he will make something better than a dog of you. But you tell me, " the man Jesus is in heaven." So much the better, for if he were here on earth in this Tabernacle, then he would not be over in Seven Dials and Golden Lane, and over in north and east London, or away there in Scotland and Ireland, or across the seas ; but, being in heaven, he is within equal reach of us, wherever we may be ; and whoever darts a thought after him, or a wish towards him, above all, whoever trusts him, shall find in him eternal life.

Sinner, you have not to deal with an absolute God ; you have to deal with God in Jesus, the man. Come, then, to him, for he has come to you. The ladder, Christ Jesus, you know has its foot on earth, and its top in heaven ; the higher we ascend the more we shall delight to think of the glory of Christ, but our first business is to think of the foot of the ladder, and I want you to-night to know that its foot stands on earth, *just in front of you*. Jesus was such as you are ; not sinful, that he could not be ; but in all else like you—poor, and suffering, as you are. Now, put your foot on the first rung of the ladder, his manhood, and his bloody sacrifice upon the cross. Trust that, and you shall climb till you ascend where the full deity of the incarnate Saviour blazes forth ; and you shall rejoice in his second advent, and all the splendours of his future reign. To-night you may leave those higher things alone. Begin at the bottom of the ladder, and commence to climb. The Lord help thee ! The Lord bless thee ! May he lay his hand on thee at this moment, poor sinner ! That will melt thy heart, that will cheer thy spirit, that will give thee life from the dead. May he do it for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Daniel x.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—820, 260, 761.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GONE. GONE FOR EVER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 28TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone."—1 Kings xx. 40.

THE parable which the prophet acted before Ahab was simple and natural. A soldier in the heat of the fight was charged by an officer to take care of an important prisoner. "Keep this man," said he, "for if thou suffer him to escape thy life shall answer for it, or thou shalt pay a talent of silver." The soldier's one business from that moment was to look after his captive; he had received command to do so from his superior officer, and his first and last work was to see that the prisoner was kept safely. However, he had other things to do belonging to himself, his family, and the like, and turning his thoughts in that direction, he forgot his charge, and the prisoner very naturally seized the opportunity to escape, and so the soldier exclaims, "While I was busy here and there, he was gone." The neglectful guard had no cause to be surprised that such was the case, but he was not prepared to bear the penalty, and therefore he came before the king to ask that he might be pardoned for his neglect. The king replied at once, "You have stated your case, and decided it; your own carelessness has lost us the captive, and you know the penalty." This story was originally told in order to touch the conscience of King Ahab, who had allowed Ben-hadad, king of Syria, to escape when providence had put the cruel monarch into his hand on purpose that he might receive his doom. Ahab is no more, but this Scripture is not, therefore, like a spent shell—there is truth and power in it yet. Its teaching is applicable to us also. Ahab is gone to his account, and the dogs have licked his blood; we may forget the guilty monarch and incline our own ears and hearts to hear what the parable may have to do with us. We, too, have received a charge: have we neglected it? We have had time and opportunity within our keeping: have they gone? Let us search and see whether it be so or not. When the rebellious king had received this warning he went to his house heavy and displeased, and it may be that the subject of this morning will be far from agreeable to many, yet will it be well for their souls if they become heavy with the burden of

No. 1,296.

repentance and displeased with themselves. Oh that the Spirit of God would speak home to all our hearts, and save us from a course of life which may cost us a thousand bitter regrets.

I. And first let us think of THE OBLIGATION which the text suggests, that we may solemnly own that we are under a higher obligation still. This man being engaged in warfare, was bound to obey the orders of his superior officer; that officer put into his custody a prisoner, saying, "Keep this man," and from that moment he was under an obligation from which nothing could free him. It is a law of discipline in the army that what a man is bidden to do by legitimate authority he must do, and therefore the man's chief business was to detain his captive safely till he could hand him over to the capturer. Dear friends, you and I are under personal obligation from the moment of our entrance upon years of responsibility, and that obligation is this—to serve, and honour, and glorify God. Every man is bound to serve his Creator, and live to his glory. That this is most just is clear as the sun in the heavens, if we will but think a little. Alas, it is a subject upon which some men have never thought, nor will they care to think. Of themselves they have been more than a little thoughtful; their duty to their neighbour they have also in some measure considered; but their obligation to God does not seem even to have crossed their minds; they forget God, and live, in fact, as if there were none, or as if they were not bound to serve him. The practical language of their life is like that of Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" They would not be unjust to a neighbour, but they practise constant injustice towards their Maker. The prophet asks, "Will a man rob God?" But, alas, thousands of lives are one long robbery of the Almighty, one perpetual disregard of claims founded upon eternal justice.

That we are bound to serve God is clear, because *we derive our being from him*. We should never have existed if it had not been for his power; we should cease to exist at this instant if that power did not sustain us in being. Surely that existence which was originated by God should be spent to his honour, and the being which hourly depends upon him should be used for his glory. Children owe obedience to their parents, and much more do creatures owe a debt to their Creator—that debt is a consecrated life, a debt which is always due, since the life is daily being maintained by fresh goings forth of divine power.

It was for this end that the Almighty made us, and for nothing short of this, that we might glorify God and enjoy him for ever. When a man fashions a vessel or a tool, it is that it may answer the purpose for which he designed it, and if it does not answer his design he casts it away. What man will keep a horse or a cow if it yield him no benefit? And if a dog never owned you as its master, who among you would long call it your own? God has made us that we may glorify him, and if we do not honour him we miss the end and object of our being. I care not what you do nor what you are; though you should be owners of a score of counties, if you love not God your soul is poor and degraded; though men should set you on a column high in air, and account you a hero, if you have not lived for God you have lived in vain. As the vine which yields no cluster is useless, so is a man who has not honoured God. As an arrow which falls short of the mark, as a fig tree which

yields no figs, as a candle which smokes but yields no light, as a cloud without rain and a well without water, is a man who has not served the Lord. He has led a wasted life—a life to which the flower and glory of existence are lacking. Call it not life at all, but write it down as animated death.

To the service of God a thousand voices call us all. I know not where we can walk without hearing those impressive calls. Lift up your eyes to the midnight sky, and every star exclaims, "We shine to Jehovah's praise; what doest thou?" Cast your eye upon the fields bespangled with living jewels, for each floweret whispers, "I bloom to the great Maker's praise; what doest thou?" Listen to the birds, whose tuneful choirs are occupied with the praises of the Lord, and they enquire of you, "Have you no music for the Lord?" The very dust, that is borne in the gale, moves according to his laws, and asks us why we disobey. Everything above, beneath, around, majestic or minute, if we will but listen, saith to us, "We are all the servants of the Most High, why wait *you* not within his courts?" Man's obligation to serve his Maker is even greater than that of any other of the creatures around him, for he is the Maker's master-piece, in which divine skill is seen to perfection: his body was curiously wrought by the fingers of infinite wisdom, and as for his soul, it is of the loftiest order of created things, and is akin to angels, so that if any created being ought to serve the Lord by whom it lives, man is that creature. Moreover, standing first in the scale of visible being, having dominion over all the works of God's hands, man should be first in loyalty to the great King. To him the laborious ox bows its willing neck; for him the horse foregoes the wild freedom of the plains; to him the sheep yield their fleeces for his covering, and their flesh for his food; for him the fish leap from the stream, and the birds drop from the wing: he hath dominion over all the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air, and reigns as God's viceroy over the brute creation: all this, and yet this exalted being forgets the sovereign who has lent him his authority and denies the homage which is due to his liege Lord. Brethren, it ought not so to be: gratitude exclaims against the revolt of a being so highly favoured.

A great argument for our obligation to glorify God is found in the fact that *in this service men find their highest honour and their truest happiness.* To serve some beings would be degrading; to be the vessel of the devil is to bring upon yourself disgrace and sorrow, but to serve the Lord is more honourable than to wear a prince's ermine, and as for happiness the angels find it heaven, and redeemed spirits own it to be their bliss, while those on earth who most fully do the will of the Lord confess themselves to be the happiest of men. It is a seraph's glory that he gives glory to God, and there we must find ours. Friend, you and I are so constituted that we never can be right except we run in the groove of obedience to the great First Cause; this is the orbit in which we can safely move; all else is chaos, and leads to misery. Wander out of the way of God's honour and you stumble among the dark mountains, and lose yourself amidst tangled briers and piercing thorns. If, then, it be man's health, happiness, and honour that he should serve God, surely his duty lies in that direction, and it is the height of folly to neglect it.

Let this, also, never be far from our memories, that *there is a day coming when we must all of us give an account of our lives, and the account will be based upon this enquiry,—How have we served and glorified God?* In that tremendous day, whose awful splendour shall cause the pomp of kingdoms to turn pale, the one great question will be, “How hast thou lived in reference to God?” Remember our Lord’s own description of the judgment. He makes service rendered to himself the test and touchstone: “I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink.” What ye did to him, or what ye did not to him, will be the hinge on which judgment shall turn. True, your actions towards your fellow-men enter into that account, for the clothing of the naked and the giving of drink to the thirsty are introduced as evidence of service done to the Lord, but then these deeds were done as unto him, and were part and parcel of that service which is his due. If there be nothing done unto the Lord, if to the Lord no reverence be rendered, if to the Lord no love be returned, then can there be no sentence for you but this, “Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

I would leave this point, but I think I hear the enquiry—“Are we, then, to leave our business, shut up our shops, forsake our families, betake ourselves to solitude and spend our time in prayer and devotion?” I said not so; I have not even hinted at such folly. I have said that you are under obligation to serve God—surely this does not imply that you are to avoid that service? When the Lord bade Jonah serve him in Nineveh was it not flat rebellion which led him to flee into Tarshish? Certainly it was not the way to keep the command. In your own callings, where God has placed you, you are to glorify him. It is not fighting a battle for a man to run out of it, to avoid the contest and the trial which comes out of it, yet that is what it comes to when a man gets to a monastery or a woman to a nunnery. Thus duty is shirked under the pretence of more easily fulfilling it, and God’s glory is sacrificed under the plea of promoting it. Did he make men to be immured in cells, or women to be buried alive in religious prisons? ’Tis an ill use to which to put an intelligent being, and a sheer waste of the Creator’s revenues. You cannot win the battle by quitting the field. Stand where your Captain has placed you, fight in his strength, and endure till victory crowns you. There is a way of glorifying God in your present position whatever it may be. A merchant or a working man, a mistress or a nurse girl, a king or a pauper, has each one a work to do: we are, or ought to be, all servants in the one great house, doing this or that as the Master appoints, and all equally glorifying God as his grace enables us. Our service to God lies not out of the way of daily life, but in it: see, then, that ye be diligent therein.

“But are we not to serve our fellow men?” Who said ye were not? There are two tables of the law; the first contains the precepts towards God, the second the commands towards men; but they are both God’s law. He that doeth good to his fellow men for God’s sake is serving God; in fact this is one of the noblest ways in which men serve God when they pursue the good of their fellows that thereby God may be glorified. Still, man is not our master, but our fellow servant. The Lord has an

undivided right to us, to every motion of our body, to every faculty of our mind, and every capacity of our entire nature; for "it is he that made us, and not we ourselves, we are his people and the sheep of his pasture."

II. Secondly, our text contains A CONFESSION: "*He was gone.*" The man was under obligation to take care of his prisoner, but he had to confess that he was gone. I anxiously desire to deal with your consciences as I will deal with my own, while I inquire, how many of us have to confess that though under obligations to God we have not fulfilled them? Alas, it may be said of many an opportunity for glorifying God, "It is gone."

First, we have lost many opportunities for serving God which arise out of the periods of life. We were children, and when the little child brings Jesus its "*Hosanna*," its early praises are very sweet to him. Ah, boys, below here, and children all around me, I hope you will not have to say, "My childhood is gone; I cannot praise Jesus with a girl's voice or a boy's tongue now, for my childhood passed away in disobedience and folly. Oh, how lovely should I have looked in Christ's eye if I had served him as a child, but it is too late now, the bud is withered, the early dew is dried up, and my morning sacrifice is unoffered." As for you, young men, it is a great thing to serve God in your youth. There is a fire and vigour, and elasticity of life about our earliest manhood which we lose when we arrive at the prime of life; and Jesus deserves to have us at our very best. It is a glorious thing to give our brightest days to Jesus; but I know there are some here who have already to look back upon early manhood wasted and gone: gone for ever. Then we come upon another period, in which we become heads of households, with a family of children about us: here are golden opportunities. The young trees can be bent, the pliant branches can be inclined this way or that while yet young, but they soon grow beyond our culture. Ah, men and women, who have lived without God all the time that you have had children under your roof, and now they have all grown up without the fear of God, with what grief must you confess your opportunities gone from your grasp! You cannot influence your children now; that opportunity is gone past recall. You cannot talk to your son now, as you might have done when you could take the fair-haired boy upon your knee and kiss him and tell him of Jesus. Your daughter is a mother herself now, and you cannot speak to her as you could have done when she was a child at home. Those days of instruction and persuasion are *gone*. Perhaps I address some who were once in business, and had considerable influence over a large number of workmen and others, but they have now retired from active engagements, for the infirmities of age have come upon them. It is a sad fact if upon looking back they are obliged to say, "A thousand chances of doing good are gone; I am out of that condition and position which afforded me such means of usefulness, and now I mourn that I did not avail myself of them." Ah, my dear friend, it is sad for you if you have to look back so far, and to own that your talent was buried in the earth, and brought in no interest for Jesus.

Another form of regret may arise out of the changes of our circumstances. A man had once considerable wealth, but a turn of providence has made him poor: it is a very unhappy thing if he has to confess, "I

did not use my substance for God when I had it. I was an unfaithful steward, and wasted my Master's goods, and now I am no longer trusted by him, my property is gone." Another may have possessed considerable ability of mind, but through sickness or declining vigour he may not be able now to do what he once did : it is grievous if he has to say, "Oh that I had spoken for Christ when I could speak ; oh that I had used my brain for him while yet my thought was clear and my perception quick ; but now, alas, my capacity is gone." To rue a change and to remember that you neglected to use your opportunity must be very painful, and yet it falls to the lot of very many. He is poor indeed who once was rich, and used not his wealth for God, and he is fallen indeed who, when he stood aloft, used not his standing for his Maker's praise.

Remember also, dear friends,—I must ask each one to take it home to himself,—the time which has not been employed in Christ's service is gone. If you have not lived unto God, how many years have now gone with some of you ! I pray you now to number the years which have rolled away. Your candle is burning low in the socket, and as yet your work is not begun ! Time is going and eternity approaching ; will you never awake ?

As time has gone so also have many persons gone to whom we might have been useful. Thousands have passed away during our short span of life. Have you not had to say, "I ought to have spoken to so-and-so, who was in my employment, but he died without hope before I had warned him, and he is gone where no word of mine can ever reach him ?" Oh, how many have passed away since I first began to address this audience, and if I could charge myself with unfaithfulness to you in preaching the word, how should I have to regret each funeral, and to remember each tomb, and say, "There lies one for whom I can render no acceptable account at last, for I have been unfaithful, and kept back the truth." I thank God I have not this to burden my heart. Do not let it be so with any of you.

Sometimes, however, the confession of the thing gone concerns noble ideas and resolves. You had great conceptions, and if they had but been embodied in action something good would have come of them ; but where are the ideas now ? Were they not smothered in their birth ? You resolved to do great things, the plan was thoroughly arranged, and your whole heart was eager to carry it out, but delay chilled the goodly purpose till it died of cold, and it lies buried in forgetfulness. You dreamed well, but there you stopped. As for actual work for the Lord, you had other fish to fry, and therefore you cast out your net for him. You suffered the season for activity to go by, and so your excellent ideas and resolutions melted into thin air, and they are gone.

Ay, and there may be some here from whom a vast wealth of opportunity has passed away. They have been blessed with great means and large substance, and if these had been laid out for Jesus Christ year after year many a lagging agency would have been quickened, and many a holy enterprise which has had to be suspended for want of means might have gone on gloriously. They could have supplied the sinews of war in the form of money, but they have stinted the Lord's exchequer and kept the work small and struggling. Their gold and their silver, according to their confession, belonged to Christ, but they have kept them to themselves.

What account will they render for this? I am sure that I cannot tell? Let them look to it. Others have possessed mental endowments; they were men of clear thought, and fluent speech, and they could have led the way in many good works, but they have kept in the rear, and lived in indolence. How will they answer for this? I would not be in their places for the world. O my God, if I had a hair upon my head that I had not consecrated to thee, I could not dare to live, lest I be found at heart a traitor to thee. Yet are there hundreds, and I must not judge them, their Master will judge them at the last, who call themselves Christians, whose consecration does not go so deep but what you might peel it off with your finger nail. Scratch a Russian, they say, and you find a Tartar; and so there are some professors who need but a slight brushing and you will find unconsecrated self beneath; they have not given themselves up in deed and of a truth unto God. It cuts me to the quick to remember that I have met with men whose possessions have even amounted to millions, who have given me an earnest grip of the hand, and thanked me for the gospel I have preached, and expressed the deepest interest in the Lord's work, and yet they have known its needs and have given nothing to carry it on, and have even passed into eternity and left nothing of their substance to assist the cause which they professed to love. The smallness of the gifts of some religious rich men staggers me beyond expression, I know not how to comprehend them. Are they hypocrites? Or do they misunderstand their position? He who doeth great wonders knows how to save; but I remember also that he whose fan is in his hand and who will thoroughly purge his floor, knows how to judge between hypocritical profession and real consecration to his service. That barren fig tree of which we read this morning, and that servant who wrapped his talent in a napkin—those parables mean something, and they mean much to any of you who have large talents committed to your trust, and who are doing next to nothing in your Master's service.

Worst of all, brethren, what will be the cry of a man when he comes to die, when, dying, he looks back upon his whole life and says, "I was busy here and there, and I did nothing for Christ: my life is gone"? And then he looks into the dim future, and, seeing no brightness there, he cries, "Woe is me, my soul is lost: I tried to gain the world and I have lost my soul. Everything that I did with so much toil and effort now turns out to be mere trifling, for my soul is lost for ever, and all is lost for ever. Would God I had never been born, for what a dreadful thing to have been born and to have lived and missed the object for which I was created." May this dreadful ruin of soul, life, and everything never happen to any one of you, *and yet it may.*

III. Thirdly, we have before us THE EXCUSE which was made—"As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone." The excuse is, "I was so busy;" which, first of all, is no excuse, because a soldier has no business to have any business but that which his commander allots to him. His sole duty was to watch his prisoner, and the one great business of every man here below is to glorify God. "But have we no secular business?" say you. I have already told you that you are to glorify God in your daily business, and by that business. You will not need to sell a yard of calico or a pound of sugar the less because you seek God's

glory ; you will not, probably, need to spend five minutes less in your worldly business in order to serve God. Consecrate all that you do by doing it unto him, and then do as much as you like. It may make a difference in your mode of doing it—it should do so where that mode is not what it should be ; but you can serve God in and by your common calling. Religion does not interfere with work, but sanctifies it. So, being busy is no excuse for being ungodly.

When the man said he was “busy here and there,” he cut away the only excuse he could have had, because that showed he had ability. If he had said, “I was sick and could not stir ; I had lost an arm, and could not hold the prisoner ; I was smitten with a fit, and was unconscious,”—there would have been some excuse ; but no, he was “busy here and there,” and if he could do one thing he could have done another thing. If he had ability enough in one way, why did he not turn that ability to use in the way which his duty required ?

Then, again, what he had done was evidently done to please himself. He was “busy here and there.” Who told him to be “busy here and there” ? He set himself work which was not cut out for him. Very well, then he was serving himself, instead of his Master, and robbing his Lord of his time and ability in order to give it to himself ; making himself his own king, and casting off his allegiance to the Lord.

Still he says he was “busy.” Now let us see what he has accomplished. Here is a man who has been busy all his life, and what has he done ? Done ? He has made a good deal of money. That is something, is it not ? He has collected a great store—for *himself*. Not having served the Lord, but having lived to make money, he has evidently thought more of gold than of God, and so he has been an idolater, and has thought less of his Maker than of his own pocket. He has despised the Lord and preferred his own gain. That is clear, and what is this but to rebel against the Most High ? What a poor thing money-hoarding is ! When you are dead what can your wealth do for you ? Yes, those horses will have more plumes on their heads, and there will be more men in shabby black to get off the empty hearse, and drink at the public house on the way home from your funeral. No doubt there will be more tomfoolery over you than there would have been if you had been a poor villager, and had been decently borne on men’s shoulders to your grave ; and there will be more quarrelling among your heirs, and perhaps a longer law suit over your property, and more pickings for the lawyers than there would have been had you heaped up less of the yellow earth. To have it said, “he died worth an immense sum” is the consummation in a great number of cases, but what is that ? What is the dead man the better for having been a millionaire ? To use money rightly is a pleasure, but to die and leave it all unused is utter misery. To heap it up for others to squander is poor work, I had as soon break stones on the road. To be the devil’s rake that another may be his pitchfork is a poor ambition. Yet this is the story of many men ; they are busy here and there for selfish ends, and all hope of serving God is gone.

I hear one of you say, “My departed friend was not busy about wealth, he sought the love and honour of his fellow citizens, and aspired to honour.” Yes, but if he served not the Lord it is clear that he loved

the praise of men better than the praise of God, and what good can that do him now that he lies in the cold grave? There was a record of his name in *The Times*, and many people said, "Another eminent man is gone," but what of that? What is honour when a man lies stark and stiff within his winding sheet?

Here is another man who says, "But I have lived for learning, I have sought after knowledge, as for hid treasure." But, my dear friend, if you have not lived for God, you have thought every knowledge worth having but the knowledge of the Most High. You have arranged and classified the different orders of flies and beetles, or put into scientific order the flowers of the field and the stars of the firmament: I do not decry your knowledge, on the contrary, I value it, but how is it that you neglect its highest branch? Science of every kind may wisely be sought after, but not at the expense of serving God. The naturalist can readily serve God in his researches and discoveries, every science can be used for God's glory; but if the science be pursued apart from the glory of God, it is as insulting as if a man should say, "Great God, thy creatures I wish to understand, but as for thyself, I care not to know or honour thee." Is not this a grievous fault?

What has the man who has forgotten his God been doing? Well, some men cannot give half so good an account as I have already given. Doing? Why some of them have lived for mere pleasure-seeking and time-killing. Too many in this luxurious city are only clothes-horses for tailors and milliners, or shall I call them patent digesters, dissolving daily great store of good meat and drink, and so on. Their one question in the morning is, "How shall we amuse ourselves to-day?" A rat lives a better life than the mere gentleman about town, who has nothing to do: at least it does not consume so much, and having no conscience it has not so much to answer for. This creature, six feet in his boots, has not the sixth part of anything good to recommend him. His soul seems to be of no use to him but to act as salt to keep his body from corrupting. It is an awful thing to be a man and yet no man. There are plenty of such about. For all the good they are you might cut better men out of brown paper, they are all sham and show. Alas, this is true of women as well as men, for the Scripture saith, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."

But what are some busy about? Alas, they are even worse than the poor fools I have just now described, for their pleasure is found in vice; they are busy in indulging their vile passions, and eternity alone will reveal the characters ruined and the lives blasted by their wickedness. They are gentlemen all the same, you know, and, having plenty of money, they can marry any man's daughter. Shame that it should be so. Ah me, what a wretched thing it will be to them to have lived a rotten life, and to have been busy only about how to indulge base passions at the cost of others' souls.

Some who think themselves a better sort have lived to criticise others, to find fault with the way in which earnest men are serving God, to tell how things ought to be done though they never do anything themselves, to show the mistakes of the virtuous and successful, and to weave plans and projects which they never carry out. To look into the future and see what is going to happen and into the past and see what ought to

have happened, and to spin fine theories, and I know not what,—where can be the good of all this? And yet in such things many a life has been frittered away, laboriously wasted in scheming how to do nothing at all. Oh, may that never be your lot, to be busy here and there, and thus to let life leak away while none of its work is done.

Oh that I could speak with a voice which could reach every heart. I grudged the smiles which I caused just now, but I only created them that they might help me to thrust graver thoughts into your minds. Brethren, is it not a sad thing to have neglected that which is evidently the main business of life? If I am God's creature I must have been meant to serve God, and if I have not served him, even as a creature, I have not done what I was meant for; but if I profess to be a Christian, then the thing assumes a more solemn form. Have I professed to be bought with Jesus' blood, and not to be my own, and have I lived as if I were my own? I profess to be filled with the Spirit of God by being regenerated—have I lived like one who has been born again? If I have been baptized upon a profession of my faith, I gave myself up to be buried in the water professing that I was dead to the world—have I been dead to the world? I said that I was going to live in newness of life as one risen from the dead—have I so lived? Oh, professing Christian men, have you been true to your professions, or have those professions been only lies? Conscience, answer me, I charge thee! O Spirit of God, quicken conscience in every one here present, so that none may be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. To serve God is the only thing worth living for, and when we lie upon the sick bed and begin to look into the future we judge it to be so. It makes a good man greedy to serve God when he thinks that his life will soon be over. He condemns himself for every wasted hour, and laments that his every faculty has not been spurred to the uttermost in the service of him who bought him with his blood. I never yet heard regrets from dying men that they had done too much for Christ, or lived too earnestly for him, or won too many souls, or given too much of their substance to the cause of God: but the regrets all lie the other way, God save us from them for his mercy's sake.

IV. Fourthly, there remains THE UNALTERABLE FACT: "While I was busy here and there, he was gone." Could you not seize him again? "No, he is gone." Is there no making-up for past neglect? No recapturing the missing one? No, he is gone, clean gone. I want you all to remember this morning that if any portion of life has not been spent in God's service *it is gone*. Time past is gone. You can never have it back again, not even the last moment which just now glided by. Go, gather the morning dew which has been exhaled by the sun; go, gather the clouds which yesterday poured forth their rain; go, gather the sunbeams which fell upon the earth last summer; but if you could accomplish that task, do not even then hope to recover the time which has departed. It is gone; omnipotence itself cannot give it back to you.

With the time, remember, your life has gone, and there is no living it over again. We have sometimes been foolish enough to say, "Oh could I live my life over again!" Why say it? You cannot live it over again; it is gone. Whatever omnipotent grace may do, it cannot alter your past life; it will be eternally what you have made it. When

the moments were like hot wax you set your seal on them, and the seal is there for ever. What your life has been the truth reports it for ever; throughout eternity it will not be possible for you to change the complexion of a single moment in which you have lived. You cannot alter the past, though you should for ever sigh. "Oh, that I had availed myself of that opportunity! Oh, that I had then been self-denying! Oh, that I had abounded in work which glorified Christ." You cannot recall an act, nor unsay a word, nor revoke a negligence.

Remember, also, that future diligence will not be able to recover wasted time. You may hold your next captive, but you cannot get back the prisoners that have already escaped you. Young man, you are not yet five-and-twenty, and there is a grand time before you. Use it, use it well; but you cannot get back the years between fifteen and twenty-five. They are gone, and if misspent are gone for ever. A man of sixty may yet do something, but what of the long wasted years already past? I suppose Luther was past forty before he began his life work, and yet he accomplished a splendid result for Christ; but even Luther could not get back his years of unregeneracy and superstition. Time is on the wing; use it now. Do not loiter, for thou canst pluck no feather from the wing of time to make it loiter too. It flies, and if thou wouldst use it, use it now. Arouse thyself, and sleep no longer. If thou wouldst indeed be true to God who made thee and to Christ who bought thee with his precious blood, use thyself now to the fullest conceivable extent for the glory of thy Lord and Master.

How shall we conclude? This sermon sweeps like a rough north wind right through us all. What shall we do? I will suggest to you what to do. Let us all fly to Jesus, who can forgive the guilt of the past. Is there one man or woman here who can say, "I have nothing to confess; no negligences can be laid at my door"? I must plainly declare that I am not one of such. I have much to mourn over. Friends, I will be chief mourner, and I will lead the way to the cross. There let us bemoan ourselves before our Saviour. His precious blood can make us clean. We will look to it; we will trust in its merits. We are clean if we believe in him. That righteousness of his, without a flaw, can cover us: let us put it on, and stand accepted in the Beloved.

When this is done, what next? Let us come to Christ again and ask him to heal us of the lethargy of disobedience which has taken hold on us so long. Some of us have forgotten our God, we have lived as if we were under no obligations to him, and even those of us who have been quickened by his Holy Spirit have not served him as we should have done. Lord, let thy precious blood heal us now, that we may think only of God and of his glory, and may henceforth live for him alone.

Once more, let us come to Christ that we may feel new motives and receive new inspirations. Have you never heard of men who have had a mighty turn? They have met with something which has given a life-long twist to their nature, so that they are new men. You knew them very well one day, but when you met them the next time you scarcely recognised them; they had become so changed and so absorbed by a subject of which they began to talk at once to you. You thought them singular, but I wish we were each one singular in

some such way. I would that my Lord Jesus Christ would meet every one of you this afternoon, and reveal himself to you. I do not ask that you should see him with your bodily eyes, but I wish your spiritual eyes might be opened that you might see him, and that he would show you his hands, and his feet, and his side, and say to you, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and I have given myself for thee. Behold, I lay upon thee these my pierced hands. Thou art mine, and therefore I charge thee live as one that is alive from the dead. Henceforth as surely as my Father sent me into the world so send I you." May this happen to each one of us, and then we shall lead new lives, and those lives will be so much to God's glory, that men will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus in some new and strange way, and have learned of him. God bless you to this end, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Luke xiii. 1—9; Luke xix. 12—26; 1 Kings xx. 35—43.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My God."—Psalm xci. 2.

If you were to find honey in a wood, and should wish to give some of it to your friends, I can imagine your cautiously taking it up in your hands, and carrying it very carefully, and yet when you reached the company you would find, to your sorrow, that a large part of it had oozed out between your fingers, so that you had failed to convey to others what was so delicious to yourself. I fear I shall be in a like condition when this sermon is done, and therefore I am the more eager to assure you at the beginning that the honey which I wish you to partake of is indeed of the very richest kind. My text has been to my own heart sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. Have you been in the Alps, or in some other region where the scenery is peculiarly impressive, and has there happened a singular conjunction of sun and cloud, of brightness and shadow, which has made the view before you to be transcendantly sublime, or surpassingly beautiful? If so, when you have reached your companions you have tried to tell them what you have seen; but in proportion as the scene has been exquisite and charming, you have been conscious of your inability to convey to them any satisfactory idea of the spectacle. If it had been a commonplace affair you could have accomplished the description and conveyed your impression of it to other minds; but on account of its being so altogether superior and out of the common way, you have failed after the most earnest endeavours to succeed, and you have exclaimed, "Ah, you should have been there yourselves. Had you seen with your own eyes you would then have understood my descriptions; but now the task of description is hopeless. Had you been there you would have known that I do not exaggerate; on the contrary, you would have felt that when I have spoken under the greatest excitement I have fallen far short of the admiration which the scene awakens." It happens to me in happy hours that a text of Scripture becomes peculiarly delicious to my heart, even as marrow and fatness to the feaster; and these two words have

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been so. They filled my spirit with sweetness even to the full ; but I fear that I cannot convey that sweetness to you. I have seen in these two words such a wonderful display of divine condescension, of the Lord's favour to his chosen, and of the intense delight which springs out of that condescension and favour, that had I but been in the pulpit at the time I could have preached with freedom, but now I do not find it so easy : expression limps to-day where enjoyment leaped yesterday. However, may God the Holy Spirit help you to see in the text what I have seen in it, even if I cannot point it out to you, and then our meditation will be remarkably delightful and profitable to us. May the Spirit of God bring fulness of meaning out of the text to your understandings and to your hearts ; and may we all rejoice together as we go out of this Tabernacle, each one of us saying "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul."

I. First let us think of these TWO WORDS TOGETHER. And to get at them let us see when they have occurred in sacred history : let us consider some of the more remarkable and special occasions upon which children of God have used these two words together, and have said "My God."

First, this is *the young convert's early confession*. The instance we will give is Ruth, who lovingly said to Naomi, "Where thou dwellest I will dwell : whither thou goest I will go : where thou lodgest I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." That last resolution was the avowal of a spiritual change. She might have been determined to lodge, and to abide with her mother-in-law, and there would have been but little in it ; but when it came to this—"Thy God shall be *my* God," then there was hope that she had been delivered by the grace of God from the bondage of idolatry, and had come to put her trust under the wings of Jehovah, the living God. Ah, dear young converts, if the Lord has revealed your sinful estate to you, and has led you to Jesus Christ to find life and salvation, you will come forward and give yourself to the Lord, and declare, "I will be thy servant, for thou art my God."

"Lord, thou art mine, for ever mine,
My heart is filled with joy divine ;
Henceforth thou shalt my treasure be,
And I will find my all in thee."

You will next give yourself to the church according to the will of God, and you will tell the church that you do so because henceforth the God of the church and the God of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be your God. You mean to dwell with the Lord's people and live and die with them, for their God is your God.

Some of you have lately been converted, or profess to have been so ; I trust your profession is thoroughly truthful, but be sure you examine yourselves. Have you taken God to be your God? Not to be a mere name to you, nor as a sacred word to sing about and pray about—but as truly *God* to you. Is God in very deed your *God*? for if he be he will rule your soul, he will dominate your whole spirit, and sway his sceptre over your whole heart. No man is truly converted until God takes his right place in relationship to him. The wicked forget God, the men of Belial defy God, the infidel denies God, but the child of God owns God, submits to his authority, and gives him the

throne of his heart. He does not give the Lord a secondary place, and permit self to be first, for that would be to deify self and insult the Lord ; but he makes God to be *God*, that is first and sole in authority and power. This is a sure index of true conversion—when God is *God* in your soul. As I have already said, God is not God to a great many; he is but a name, and nothing more to them ; but when he becomes *God*—and it is a great word that—when he takes the place which the Creator, the Redeemer, the God should occupy, then is the soul converted indeed. Now, whether we were converted yesterday, or have known the Lord for twenty, thirty, or forty years, I trust we can address our mother, the church, and say as Ruth said to Naomi, “Where thou lodgest I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

These words, in the next place, may be regarded as *the statement of the Christian's belief* : I mean here not merely his first confession of it, but his after statement of it. Here is our creed and our confession of faith. Take Thomas for the illustration. He has been very sceptical. Poor Thomas ! He seems to have had too much brain and too little heart ; he was always for fighting his way through intricate questions and for answering tough objections ; had he been alive now, if the grace of God had not improved him, he would have been a “modern thought” divine, a critical brother suggesting more problems than all the rest of us could solve. He must have tokens, marks, and evidences, or else he will not believe ; but he is highly indulged, and the Saviour permits him to put his finger into the prints of the nails, and his hand into his side, and when he has done so, Thomas by a strange but blessed logic infers the deity of Christ from his wounds. He was the first, I believe, who had ever done so, but certainly not the last, and having from the very wounds of his Lord's body inferred his deity, he exclaimed, “My Lord and my God !” In this plain, decided testimony to our Lord's divinity we all unite. It is the heartfelt confession of faith of every Christian in reference to the Lord Jesus ; there is no room for two opinions on that point. If there be any professing Christians in this world who do not call Christ their God—well, brethren, we are sorry for them, and pray the Lord to give them spiritual life and light ; but as for us, the Man who bled on Calvary is “very God of very God” to us, and that in the broadest and deepest sense. As the angels bow before him, so also do we ; we count him “worthy to receive honour and power divine.” There are many differences of opinion in the church of God which may be tolerated, but this is beyond all controversy and can never be a moot point. Here our protests against error must be firm and unmistakable. I admired a remark that was once very merrily made by good William Gadsby when a Unitarian chapel had been erected near a Baptist place of worship. The story has been told to me that someone in the vestry was greatly mourning over the circumstance, and saying what a sad opposition it was. Gadsby said, “Well, man, I do not see any opposition in it.” “But surely it is a great opposition, Mr. Gadsby. They deny the deity of Christ.” “Why, man,” said Gadsby, “that is no opposition. Suppose you kept a baker's shop, and sold good bread, and a man came and opened an ironmonger's shop opposite, would you call that an opposition ? Certainly not, it is a different line altogether.” And so it is. Where we preach the deity of Christ, that is one line of things ; but where that

is denied we cannot regard it as another form of Christianity; it is a different thing altogether, quite as different as iron would be from bread. The Socinian is nearer akin to the Mohammedan than to the Christian. He who does not own the deity of Jesus disowns him altogether. I cannot see how Jesus Christ can be anything but one of two things—either the Son of God or else a gross impostor who allowed his disciples to think him divine, and used the virtues of his character to support his claim; all the worse an impostor because he had a fine moral sense, and yet employed even virtue's self to aid his blasphemous ambition. Either God or an arch-deceiver he must have been. Brethren, we will have no mincing of matters about that point. Charity is all very well, but truth comes first. "First pure, then peaceable" is a good rule for our judgment on such points. On the matter of our Lord's Godhead we cannot for an instant hesitate: we do not merely believe Jesus Christ to be God, but we risk our eternal future upon that truth. I am a lost man, I know, and for me there can be nothing but eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, if the Saviour, Christ, be not divine. *But he is divine.* This we will maintain in the teeth of all men as our confession of faith—Jesus Christ, the Son of the Highest, very God of very God, is my Lord and my God.

Thus, then, *my God* is the first and last confession of faith of those who are under the new covenant; it is the utterance both of the babe in grace and of the more advanced Christian.

Furthermore, my brethren, the words, "My God," have often been used to declare *the determination of the believer when he has been surrounded by opponents and persecutors.* Grandly did old Micaiah use this expression when the false priests were round about him. Prophets who pretended to be inspired delivered their oracles, and old Micaiah said, "As the Lord *my God* liveth. Whatsoever *my God* saith unto me that will I speak." Neither less nor more did he speak, because he believed in Jehovah as being his God, and submitted himself entirely to Jehovah's sway. The false priests worshipped Baal, Moloch, and Ashtaroth; but old Micaiah cared not what they worshipped, he knew who was his God, and he avowed his God to their teeth. O, ye who call yourselves the people of God, be ready always to stand up for Jehovah in whatever company you may be; for there are many gods and many lords in our land at this day, and multitudes of professed Christians have turned aside from worshipping the God of Israel. They have set up new gods, and the Eternal is despised. The Old Testament, they tell us, is a revelation uncouth and harsh: the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob is not at all the God of their fancy, for he is too terrible, too severe, too righteous, too just. They want a milder, gentler God, and they pretend that Jesus Christ has revealed quite a different deity from the God of the Old Testament. Ah, brethren, in this they greatly err, for the Lord changeth not, and is the same to-day under the gospel as he was yesterday under the law. We believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "the God of the whole earth shall he be called." We worship the God of Israel, the God who made the heavens and the earth, the God who cleft the Red Sea, the God who spake in thunder from Sinai. We believe that Jesus Christ has not
to reveal to us a new deity, but to declare unto us the God who

is from the beginning. Ours is the song of Zacharias: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began." "This God is our God for ever and ever: he shall be our guide even unto death."

"The God of Abraham praise
Who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of everlasting days,
And God of love!
Jehovah, Great I AM!
By earth and heaven confest;
I bow, and bless the sacred name,
For ever blest!"

The words "my God" may well express *the secret vow of the believer as he consecrates himself to the most High*: of this we have an instance in the life of Jacob. He said, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace: then shall the Lord be *my God*." We have each said that, I hope, many times, when we have renewed our vows unto the Lord. Though we have known the Lord for twenty or thirty years, yet, as we have needed him anew in time of trouble, or as he has revealed himself to us afresh in a way of deliverance, we have laid hold upon him by faith over again and said, "Yes, he is *my God*." Have you never felt your heart full to overflowing while thinking over such a text as this, "My Beloved is mine and I am his"? I do not know a more delightful contemplation for a quiet hour alone than to weigh each syllable of that promise, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Look it over, turn it over, taste it, feed on it, and digest it, and see the mutual possession, even as in those other texts, "The Lord's portion is his people," and "The Lord is my portion saith my soul." Christ is ours, and we are Christ's. You cannot, dear friend, do better than oftentimes hand over again the title-deeds of your soul to God, yea, not of your soul only, but of everything you have, for if you make an inventory of all you have to the last penny it is your Lord's. Even so is the Lord altogether yours, and you should often renew your grasp of him. Take him to be your only Lord and God as long as you live, and, while others boast in their treasures, be it your joy to cry, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee." Thus with two words, "*My God*," we avow our faith both in the presence of our enemies and before our Lord himself.

But I cannot linger here. I must have you notice next, that these words, "My God" have sometimes afforded *the deepest possible comfort to children of God in times of terrible trouble*. When our dear Lord and Master was in his greatest woe—when all the waves and billows of judgment were going over his soul, the exclamation which came from him at the climax of his grief was, "My God! My God." True, it was attended with the question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" but still, as with a two-handed grip, he seemed to get a hold of God when he said, "*My God! My God!*" Driven to extremity, he settled his heart on

that one point. There was the anchor hold of his hope, "My God, my God." He did not say, "My disciples": they had all forsaken him. He could not call on his mother and brethren: they were powerless to console. No arm, angelic or human, could minister to his aid. He was alone in the grasp of death, unsupported and unsustained, forsaken of earth and heaven, and left a prey to the powers of darkness; but this—this was the cry which kept him alive, and gave him strength to bear even to the end. "My God," saith he, "they have not robbed me of thee. My God, I still will appeal to thee. Though thou hide thy face and seem to forsake me, yet I know thou still art mine, and I hold thee fast to the end. My God! my God!" You will never have to use those words in so dire an extremity of woe; but if hereafter you ever come into deep waters, may you have grace to say, "My God," for if you do you will soon be enabled to shout, "It is finished." "My God," is a love note in days of peace, and a war cry for hours of battle; it is mighty in times of joy, but it is still more potent in nights of sorrow. The man who can say "My God," is a match for death and hell; by that watchword he shall master sin and overthrow all the hosts of the world, the flesh, and the devil. In this sign thou mayest conquer: the watchword of victory is, "My God."

Once more. *Those words have been heard in cases precisely the opposite of deep distress.* When very marvellous deliverances have been enjoyed, the expression "My God" has frequently come from the lips of those who have experienced them. When Miriam took her timbrel and went forth in the dance because God had overthrown Pharaoh and his hosts, she sang a song which Moses had composed for her, and you will remember that one of the verses was—"He is *my God*, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." She had never reached that point, "He is my God," until Pharaoh's hosts and his chosen captains had been drowned in the Red Sea: then she felt proud that she had such a God, and her faith exulted as she beheld his arm made bare. Think also of Daniel, and that happy moment when he exultingly called Jehovah his God. When the prophet had been all night in the lion's den, Darius comes, and with a plaintive cry he asks if Daniel yet lives. He is afraid the lions have devoured him. Do you notice Daniel's answer? He says, "*My God* hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths." You do not wonder that he said "My God," do you? I do not think he could have coolly said, "*God*—God hath sent his angel." He could not have spoken so coldly. The deliverance he had experienced, the great goodness of God in keeping him alive that night in the lions' den, made him feel that he must with arms of love and faith embrace the Omnipotent Preserver, and call him "My God." Beloved, if you have experienced joyous deliverances of the same order, you have learned to say, "My God." If you have seen your sins drowned in the Red Sea you have said, "My God," and if the lions have been chained, and you have escaped their jaws, you, too, have said, "My God." I earnestly hope that if the trouble which has now come upon you should prove to be sharper and more grievous than any before, it may turn out to have been sent in order that you may say "My God" with a deeper emphasis, and feel your soul more fully filled with the blessed meaning of those two matchless monosyllables.

So much, then, about the times when these words have been used. May the Spirit of God lead us to those specialities of experience in the midst of which these words shall become the frequent language of our hearts.

II. Briefly let us notice in the second place what means this FIRST WORD "MY"—"MY God." In what sense and respects can God be mine? He fills heaven and earth—can I call him mine? "His tender mercies are over all his works": I cannot set a hedge around his benevolence, or claim a monopoly of his compassion. How, then, can I call him mine? He is so inconceivable; he is boundless in nature; his every attribute is infinite. A man may call a province his own, for it is within his compass, he can travel over it, or sail round it: an emperor may call thousands of square miles his own, for, still, the eagle's pinion or the dove's light wing can soar from boundary to boundary of his empire. The broadest dominion may be mapped and measured; but how can I call that mine which I cannot even conceive? If my thought cannot compass it, shall my heart possess it? Yes, yes, so the text says. "My God." Love possesses what reason cannot even look upon.

Still, what means this daring appropriation? Why, it must mean this among other things: first, that *I own him to be my God*. Whatever gods others may have, Jehovah is God to me. To whomsoever Jehovah may be a name, he is God to me, and, as Father, Son, and Spirit, three persons in one blessed unity, I adore him. He may be despised and rejected; there may be other names set up in competition with him, but to me—to me—he is the only God. I wish that you in this assembly may all say at once, most heartily and distinctly,—“Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” I hope you will avow yourselves this day to be his people, and take the God of Israel, the God and Father of your Lord Jesus Christ, to be your God. That is a part of the meaning. There is an owning the Lord to be our God.

But, next, *the words imply a personal recognition of him*. Venus and Jupiter and Bacchus, those ancient deities of Greece and Rome, we have all talked about them as myths and fictions, but as actual gods we ignore them, they are no gods to us. Some of us read classical books in our boyhood: I am sure they have done us more harm than good, but we have read them, and therefore we know all about the imaginary history and doings of those most disgusting gods and goddesses; but we are very well aware that they are dreams and falsehoods; we know no such beings, they are nothing to us. We have heard also of Juggernaut, and of the thousands and millions of gods of Hindustan, but we have no acquaintance with them. I have felt thankful when I have seen likenesses of Krishna and Siva that they were no relations of mine. There is one god with an elephant's head, and another god with a cat's head: I am delighted to think that I was never on speaking terms with such monsters, and could never call them mine. If they be gods to others they are not so to us: we know them not, their names we despise, and their pretensions we detest. But, brethren, we know our God. It is true we have not seen him at any time. "Ye saw no similitude," said he, when he spake to his people from the top of Sinai. We have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape; yet as

spirits speak to spirits we have been cognizant of the action of the Spirit of God upon our spirits. You and I know that we have often been moved by one another's spirits. This very night while I am speaking my spirit is known of your spirit, and you are recognising my spirit while I speak: in much the same way the Holy Spirit, by his mysterious operations, has come into contact with our spirits, so that though we know him not by sight, and hearing, and taste, and smell, all of which deceive us, yet we recognize him by an inner and infallible sense which was created in us at our regeneration by the hand of God. That there is a God we know by spiritual perception. He has opened our ear so that we hear his voice; he has given us new sight by which we perceive him, and are even more assured of his presence than we could be if we had the evidence of our eyes and ears. He is not a God in cloudland to us, he is intensely real and true; he is a God with whom we speak: a God who calls himself our friend, our Father; a God who invites us to come and reason with him; a God who assures us of the love of his heart; a God who tells us his secrets, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." O men of the world, we are as sure of the existence of God and of his being ours as ever you can be sure of your gold or your lands, and we are as truly acquainted with him as you are with your friends. Hence it is that he is no longer simply God to me, but he is "*My God*." Just as when I know a man by familiar intercourse, he is not merely *a* friend, but he is "*my friend*," so has it come to pass between God and us; and by each believer he is fitly styled, "*My God*."

I hope the matter has proceeded farther than that. We not merely know that he is God, and have not only recognized his divine existence, but we have come *into relations with him*. There is a natural and necessary relation between God and his creatures; but it is not always recognized. When it is discerned by the soul, because the Spirit of God illuminates the heart, man rises into a new relationship to God, and feels as he never felt before. For instance, he comes into the relation of a pardoned child. Oh, if you have ever been forgiven you will know him that forgave you, and you will say, "*My God*." If you feel the Spirit of adoption now within your heart you will know who adopted you, and you will cry, "*My God, my Father*." You receive of his bounty according to the gift of his grace from day to day, and therefore while consciously receiving abundant mercies from the Lord, you learn to say, "*My God* will supply all my needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

The pith of the matter lies in this. "*My God*" means that *we have appropriated him to ourselves*. We take him by a daring act of faith to be henceforth God to us, and all that he is we take to be ours for ever and ever. May we do this? Brethren, may we do this? Ah, yes, appropriating faith is warranted in the covenant, for the covenant runs thus, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." It is justified also by the act of God, for did he not give his Son? And when he gave his Son to redeem us could he withhold anything from us? Did he not in that act virtually give us himself, for Christ is in the Father, and the Father is in him, and he that hath received Jesus hath received the Father. Say "*My Saviour*," and you need not be afraid to say

"My God." Moreover, not merely does the covenant warrant it, and the act of God justify it, but there is the witness of the Spirit within us, which hath taught us our right to say, "My God." When we have said unto the Lord, "Thou art my God," the Holy Spirit has not chided us, nor smitten our conscience, nor rebuked us for presumption, nor humbled us for pride on that account ; but, on the contrary, peace has followed—calm rest, holy joy, quiet trustfulness, and assured confidence, all of which are the true fruits of saying, "My God," and at the same time the genuine works of the Spirit of God. Thus we know that we have not erred when we have made this claim. Moreover, dear friends, we may expect our confidence and assured appropriation to become stronger and stronger as life goes on. We have not been wrong in saying "My God," for we have grown into saying it more and more in proportion as the Lord has sanctified us. As we conquer sin, we say, "My God" more assuredly, and as we grow in grace we say, "My God" with greater confidence : therefore it cannot be wrong. We expect in heaven to say "My God" still more positively. Beloved, how boldly we shall say it there! No sin, no doubts, no clouds to divide us from him ; then shall we know that the infinite Jehovah is ours to enjoy for ever and ever. Oh, it is not crowns of gold, it is not music of sweetest harps, it is not palm branches or white robes of victory that our souls will most delight themselves in : we shall triumph in "God our exceeding joy." "At his right hand are pleasures for evermore." We shall even in heaven find it bliss to say to ourselves, "God is mine." What God *does* is great, what God *has* is great, but what God *is* is far more than what he does or has, because he can do and have infinitely more than he ever has done or has created ; yet it is God himself and what he is which is ours for ever. In grasping the Lord by faith, and saying, "He is mine," what a sweep the soul has made ! It has, as it were, encompassed eternity, set its own seal upon infinity, and appropriated Allsufficiency.

III. Finally, let us spend two or three minutes upon the LAST WORD—"my God," "God!" What does it mean? Ah, now, you have asked me a question which I cannot answer. The wise man was asked "What is God?" and he requested that he might have a day to consider his answer. When the sun had set he said that he must have three days, for in thinking of it the subject grew. They gave him three days, and when these were over he demanded six days more, for the subject was greater than ever. When they called upon him at the six days' end, he claimed twelve days more, for the subject was still beyond him. They bade him take the twelve days, and they would hear the result of his thoughts. The next time he said that he must have a month ; and, at the month's end, he gave them no information, but assured them he must have a year. When the year was over, he confessed that he should need a lifetime: he should never be able to tell them what God was so long as he lived. There is no defining the Incomprehensible One. Yet, brother, you and I can call him "My God."

Let us reflect upon his being ours as to *his nature*, his person, his essence. There is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three in one : then the Father is my God : he hath loved me, he hath chosen me, he hath begotten me, hath provided for me, he is my Father, my all. Then, too, the adorable Son is mine—Jesus, the Redeemer, the Prophet,

Priest, and King, the Intercessor, the Judge, is mine. Then the Holy Spirit is mine—the Instructor, the Quickener, the Sanctifier, the Comforter. Dew, fire, wind, dove—whatever the metaphor under which he veils himself—he is mine. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit—to these beloved and glorious persons of the one undivided Godhead faith says, “My God.”

When I have thought of the blessed persons let me think of *his attributes*. Omniscience is mine, the Lord knows everything for me. Omnipotence is mine, he will do everything for me. Justice is mine, reconciled to me by the death of Jesus. Mercy is mine, enduring for ever. Truth is mine, he will keep his promise. Immutability is mine, he changeth not, and therefore I am not consumed. Rehearse all the attributes peculiar to the divine nature and say unto the Lord “Thou art my God, and therefore all thy blessed perfections and glorious attributes are mine.”

Think of him again *in what he has done*, as well as in what he is. As Creator he is *my* Creator; not merely as creating me, but as making “all things” for me, that I may richly enjoy them. Whatever I look upon I may enjoy, because he made it. He hath made all things holy, and the curse which sin engendered he has removed through the death of his Son, and now as I traverse the world I may delight myself in the works of the Creator, and say, “These are thy glorious works, Parent of good, Almighty; and thou givest them to me that I may see thee in them and enjoy them to thine honour.” The Lord is also our Redeemer, and the believer calls him “my Redeemer” and “my God.” It was *my God* that poured out his life unto death upon the bloody tree. *My God* hath loved me and given himself for me. The Lord is, moreover, the Sanctifier, he carries on the work of grace in the soul, and in this he is my God. He is the God of providence, and ruleth all things according to his will; and in that character he is my God. The Lord Jesus Christ will come to judge the world, and heaven and earth shall pass away before the glory of his face; but he that shall make heaven rock and reel is my God, and he that shall make the rocks run like rivers, and the stars fall like withered leaves from the tree, is my God, the God of my salvation. Oh, is it not blessed to think of God in any light or aspect under which you are able to conceive of him, and then to be able to say at the end of it all, “He is my God in all his works and in all his relationships, in all his attributes, and all his glories”? To me it is the utmost bliss at this moment to claim with each one of my brethren that he is *my God*.

Do you know, if you could once say this—and I do wish that every man, and woman, and child in this house could from the heart say, “My God”—if you could say this, it would sweeten so many things to you. This book—how you would love this precious Bible, for then you would say, “It is my book now, because it is my Father’s book—my God’s book.” You would value every line of it. There would be a new sweetness in every single verse, because it is your Father’s handwriting, inspired by his own Spirit—that Spirit which belongs to you, and it tells you of your own Saviour—the Saviour who loves you, and who gave himself for you. If you could call God your own, you would love the Father supremely, because you would say, “It is my day, because it

is the Lord's day—the day of my risen Saviour. He has taken it to himself, and enclosed its hours for his own, and now henceforth I prize its earliest and its latest moments because they are his." A sense of the Lord's being yours would make you love his people too. When I first came to London from the village where I formerly preached, I was very glad to see anybody who came from that region; and if I had seen a dog wag its tail that I had once seen in that village I should have been pleased. I should have loved anybody for the sake of the dear old place; and, surely, when you can say, "My God," you love all the Lord's people. Many a young Christian has been deceived by hypocrites because of his love to Christians, and that love is sometimes abated by such ill deeds; but where there is overflowing love to the Father there will be affection for the family. Be it ours to show it. If you see in any man anything that is like Christ, love him for it. If he is not all you would like him to be, remember that you, also, are not all you ought to be. Surely if Jesus Christ loves a man you should love him too. Seek your brother's good and aim at benefiting him because he is one of Christ's members. Love for Christ's sake all those who can say "My God."

I do not know, but I seem to myself to have talked away and to have missed my aim and object altogether, compared with what I have felt while meditating in private upon these dear and blessed words, "My God." It is a deep well, but the water is cool and sweet if you can draw it up. "My God,"—there is more than satisfaction in the words. If you have no money, never mind; you are rich if you can say, "My God." If the husband is buried, if the children have gone home to heaven, do not despair, thy Maker is thy husband, if you can cry, "My God." If your friends have forsaken you, if those who ought to have sustained you have been cruel and unkind to you, he changes not, and he bids you call him, "My God." If the unkindnesses of men drive you to say "My God," you will be a gainer by them. Anything which weans from earth and weds to heaven is good. I saw yesterday a park in which they were felling all the trees, and yet there were the poor crows building on elms that were marked to be cut down. I thought to myself, "You foolish birds to be building your nests there, for the woodman's axe is ringing all around and the tall elms are tumbling to the ground." We are all apt to build our nests on trees that will be cut down. We get to love the creature and to say, "My this," and "My that;" and from this weakness our sharpest sorrows arise. If you build nowhere but on the tree of life, which never can be felled, if you build nowhere but on the rock of ages which can never crumble, happiness will be yours of a safe and lasting kind: but you can only do this by saying "My God."

Now, I dare say, there are some unconverted people here who wonder what we are making all this fuss about. They have their own hoarded treasures and cherished possessions, and they see no beauty in God that they should desire him. No, but let me tell you—you who have no God and no Saviour—the day will come when you would give your eyes, nay, you would give your very lives, if you could say "My God." Men have been worth thousands of pounds, and when they have lain a-dying without God they have said of their gold, "It will not do!"

They have had their money-bags brought to the bed, and pressed them to their heart, and said, "They will not cheer my soul, they will not calm my spirit." If you do not die crying out "Woe is me that I die without God," yet, at any rate, after death, when you shall have risen from the dead, and you see the Judge, and you stand as a criminal before his bar, you will think yourself ten thousand times ten thousand fools in one that ever you lived and died without God and without Christ. How will infinite anguish rend your heart while you have to confess "I tried to gain the world, but lost my soul! I am a fool of the worst order! Alas! that I should be such a maniac!" O sinner, I wish you would go to Jesus. May God's Spirit lead you to Jesus to-night. Cry mightily to God that he would give himself to you through Jesus Christ, the Saviour. He will do it, for he waiteth to be gracious. Try him; and God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxxvii.

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GATHERING TO THE CENTRE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 4TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

"They came to him from every quarter."—Mark i. 45.

THE fact as it stands is well worthy of our notice, and offers considerable encouragement to us. The multitudes came to hear our Lord and to see his miracles. He could not lie hid, but wherever he appeared a congregation soon assembled; indeed the crowds became too large and too pressing, "insomuch that they trod one upon another." Few preachers suffer from our Lord's difficulty, but it was a frequent necessity with him to use means to diminish the crowds, and therefore he repaired to desert places, or took ship and crossed the sea.

I gather from this, dear friends, that notwithstanding the holiness of our Lord's doctrine, and the way in which it runs counter to the desires of the carnal heart, notwithstanding the plainness of his rebukes and the way in which he lays pride in the dust, there is a remarkable attractiveness to all kinds of men in the teaching of the Lord Jesus. If we would find a topic calculated to interest the masses, we need not go abroad for novelties—the old, old gospel will best collect the eager anxious throng. Other things being equal, you shall find that more men will be drawn together to hear of Christ than to listen to any other topic; and this will continue year after year while other subjects have lost what temporary interest they once possessed. Give a man any other theme you please, and let him expatiate upon it three or four times a week in the same place to the same audience, and it will not be long before his hearers will be weary, and he himself will be jaded. I do not believe it would be possible to retain year after year a mass of attentive hearers, and send them away longing for more, with any theme except Jesus Christ and him crucified. If you bring Jesus forth the people will continue to come to him from every quarter, for the prophecy of Jacob is still true, "To him shall the gathering of the people be."

The attraction in the instance before us was not only Jesus preaching, but Jesus displaying his healing power. The works which he did, these bore witness of him; until the people asked, "What thing is this?"

No. 1,298.

What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits and they obey him." The news of lame men leaping, and lepers cleansed, brought the people together. Even thus, let Jesus be in any congregation manifesting his saving work: Jesus breaking hard hearts, Jesus binding up broken spirits, Jesus reclaiming the outcasts, Jesus gathering the lambs in his bosom, Jesus in action, then be sure of this, the people will come together till you will have to cry "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?" The best advertisement for Jesus is the personal testimony of every soul whom he has blessed. To blaze abroad his fame you need hire no hack pens or mercenary tongues; they shall speak best of him who tell out the things which they have made touching the king, whose tongues are as the pens of ready writers because their hearts dictate the matter; they have experienced his power, and therefore they cannot but speak what they have seen and felt. Jesus Christ healing and spoken of by those whom he had healed, drew multitudes to himself in the olden times, and I gather from this the expectation that if any one of us will preach Christ in Christ's way, accompanied by Christ's power in the healing of men, we shall even in desert places see the people coming together, and all the more so because he has been lifted up upon the cross, and therefore will draw all men unto him.

But, dear friends, there was an inner circle. The mere hearers did but come to him in the lowest sense. I do not think Jesus Christ set much store by drawing multitudes around him to listen to his words or look upon his miracles; I am sure he did not, for he sought to avoid such popularity, and therefore he forbade the leper to speak of his cure, and he withdrew himself to escape from the people. If he had considered that success was to be measured by the size of his audience, he would have remained where the crowds were assembled; but he formed a more accurate judgment, and knew that as the heap upon the threshing-floor contains abundance of chaff, even so in the great gatherings of mere hearers, there are multitudes whose adherence is of little value. Beloved, if men only come together to hear the gospel, our work will end in dreary disappointment, and the gatherings of the Sabbath will prove to be a wretched waste of time; but my text can be carried as a matter of fact very much further, for disciples came to Jesus from every quarter in a far better sense. He called by his mysterious power one and another who became his followers, and they came to him in the best sense. We read that he went into a mountain and called whom he would, and they came to him: this was a better coming. Of them it may be said, "They came to him from every quarter." It is very beautiful to see what a mixture Christ's disciples were. There were fishermen, but they were not all of that class; for there was among them a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews; there was a devout Nathanael, but there was also a publican to whose house salvation came. They were not all of the lower ranks, for among the holy women who ministered to him were some from Herod's court, and one who is called "the beloved physician" followed him as his Lord. They were not all of characters commendable, for a woman that was a sinner was his true disciple, but there were others against whom no moral fault has ever been alleged. They came to him drawn by his mysterious power from every portion of the land, from

every condition and rank, from many phases of mind and types of character: "they came to him from every quarter."

That is the matter of fact,—I am now going to use the fact typically. I believe that as it was literally true that men came to hear our Lord, and others came to believe on him, from every quarter, so it is still; and unto the Lord Jesus Christ men and women in the preaching of the gospel are still coming from every quarter.

I. I will begin with the exterior ring again. OF THE OPEN OR PROFESSIONAL COMING TO CHRIST it may be said with a great deal of sorrow, "They came to him from every quarter."

The gospel when it is preached draws many to itself who are not saved by it. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net which men cast into the sea, and it gathered of every kind. There is a day coming in which they will put the good into vessels and cast the bad away, but throughout this dispensation there will be every kind in the net. Tares will grow with the wheat, and fruitless branches will be in the vine. Men come to Christ by the avowal of Christianity, by the appropriation of its ordinances, and the subscribing of its creed; and in this sense they still come to him from every quarter. You must not imagine that in this church all who have come to Christ nominally have come really. Do not indulge such a delusion, for if you do you will certainly be deceived. You may belong, my dear brother, to some little Bethel or select Ebenezer, but do not indulge the hope that all who professedly come to Christ even there, though they are all so admirably sound and orthodox, have all of them really come to Jesus, for even there a mixture will be found. "Many are called and few are chosen." You shall take any twelve you will, but you cannot be sure but what one of them is a devil, for among the twelve selected by the Master, Judas Iscariot was found. They come to Christ from every quarter, from the land of hypocrisy and formality as well as from the country of sincerity.

Many came to Christ in his day, and followed him from the lowest of motives. Loaves and fishes were good bait then, and they are now. We have not many of these attractions in this church, but in certain quarters there are large loaves of very choice bread, exceedingly well buttered, and there are fishes too of the best kind, great fishes, and well cured, whose savoury smell is dear to many. A taste for the church loaves and fishes is pretty common still, so that many come to the church, and nominally to Christ, from the quarter of the land called selfishness, and so make a gain of godliness.

Some came to our Lord merely to receive benefits to their bodies; they brought a blind eye to be healed, or a withered arm to be restored, but they obtained no spiritual gifts. Thus do many derive benefit from the religion of Jesus of a moral and mental kind, but they miss the nobler boons of the spiritual life. No doubt many are charmed by Christian society, by the comforts of religious worship, and by the degree of respectability which arises out of a profession, and yet they are not saved souls. We must not wonder when the loaves grow small, and are only made of barley, and the fishes decrease in number, if the mere hangers on show us their true quality and disappear. He who comes to Christ for what he can get of worldly good will leave him when poverty and shame lie in the way.

A number came to Christ out of admiration of his eloquence, for he spake as never man spake, and it is no wonder that a woman of the multitude exclaimed in admiration, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the paps that gave thee suck!" How true, however, was our Lord's reply, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." He turned her mind to something better than admiration, namely, believing reception: but with such a speaker and with such gracious matter it was no marvel that among his followers were found admirers of the speaker as well as believers in the Saviour. We must not wonder if we still find that some profess to come to Christ because he is eloquently set forth by his ministers, or because the poetical beauties of the Bible and the natural charms of religion win their tastes and hold them with their spell. It is a poor coming which arises from this and nothing more.

A large number came to our Lord from the region of transient enthusiasm. "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," said one, but he failed to do so. There were stony ground hearers in those days whose blade of promise, because it had no depth of earth, sprang up very speedily, and as speedily withered away. Do not be astonished, brethren, if the stony ground hearers perplex and disappoint us still. They come to Jesus from Pliable's country still, and come only to go back to their own place.

There were those who came to Jesus Christ through misunderstanding his character. If they had known him better, they would not have followed him as far as they did; and they proved this, for when they discovered more they went back and walked no more with him. When he began to unveil certain parts of the truth concerning himself which had been hidden before, they said, "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" When his cross became more apparent, and their vision of an earthly kingdom grew more and more dim, they proved that they had followed him under an error, for they went their way. And no doubt many to-day profess the name of Jesus who are not aware what discipleship really involves; they do not know him nor his cross, nor the truth he came to teach, and we may expect to see these go back, when fuller discoveries shall startle them. They come to him from every quarter.

Brother minister, friend working in the Sabbath school, labourer for Christ in any low district, you may fairly expect that the people will come to Christ, but do not expect that they will all come from the land of honesty and truth. Do not count all fish that come to the net, or it may happen that your sure disappointment will damp your zeal and diminish your confidence in the gospel. Expect to take good fish in your net, but reckon upon finding the dog fish there too, breaking your lines and biting your other fish. Out of the best haul a fisherman ever makes there is something to throw away. When you sow good seed look for wheat to spring up, but be not surprised if tares spring up also. Just now the sun and the showers are making the corn grow fast, but the weeds are growing too. It must be so. Those influences which cause the good to be more lively appear to arouse the energies of the evil. Whenever the devil is asleep the church is asleep, but whenever the church wakes the devil wakes too. Every worker for Christ may reckon on mixed results, and when they come he must not despair as though

some strange thing had happened unto him. Yet let us be thankful that many came to Jesus from the land of sincerity, men convinced that he was the Christ, men like the disciple to whom he said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." Some in coming gave him their whole hearts, and henceforth sat at his feet and received his words. Some of the best were with him, though there were some of the worst. Grateful hands were there which could break an alabaster box and pour it out for his sake, as well as cruel hands which could clutch the blood-stained pieces of silver—the price of his betrayal.

I leave that point when I have asked you from what quarter you came. Are you true men or spies. Do you come from the assemblies of deceit, or from the abodes of sincerity? Search and look! "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobate." I pray God that none of us may be found reprobate in that day.

II. Secondly, we will advance to something nearer and better. OF THE FIRST REAL SPIRITUAL COMING TO CHRIST BY FAITH it may be said in the words of the text, "They came to him from every quarter." Let me here employ an illustration. Seeking rest and health last week, I seated myself for a little while near a very rustic church which stands embowered in a wood, and as I sat there I moralized upon the various paths which led up to the church porch. Each trackway through the grass came from a different quarter, but they all led to one point. As I stood there this reflection crossed me: even thus men come to Christ from all quarters of the compass, but if indeed saved, they all come to him. There is a path yonder which rises from a little valley. The little church stands on the hill side, there is a brook at the bottom, and worshippers who come from the public road must cross the rustic bridge and then ascend the hill. Such comers rise at every step they take. Full many burdened ones come to Christ from the deep places of self-abasement; they know their sinfulness and feel it; their self-consciousness has almost driven them to despair; they are down very low, and every step they take to Christ is a step upwards. They have a little hope as they look to him, and then a little more, till it comes to a humble trust; then from a feeble, trembling trust it rises to a simple faith, and so they advance till when they stand near to Jesus they even reach to the full assurance of faith. Thus from soul distress and self-despair they come to the Lord Jesus, and he receives them graciously. Through the churchyard there was another path, and it ran up-hill from where I stood, and therefore every one who came that way descended to the church door. These may represent the people who think much of themselves; they have been brought up in morality and lived in respectability in the town of Legality; they have never turned aside to the grosser vices, but are among the models of behaviour. Every step these good people take towards Christ is downward; they think less of themselves and still less; regret leads to repentance, repentance to bitter grief, and grief leads to self abhorrence, till they come down to the level where Jesus meets with sinners, by owning that they are nothing, and that Christ is all. The two paths which I have mentioned were supplemented by a third, which led through a thick and tangled wood: a narrow

way wound between the oak trees and the dense underwood, and I noticed that it led over a boggy place, through which stepping stones had been carefully placed for the traveller, that he might not sink in the mire. Many a seeker has found his way to Jesus by a similar path. Dark with ignorance, and briary with evil questionings, the path winds and twists about, and leads through the Slough of Despond, wherein a man had need pick his steps very carefully, or he may sink in despair. Those whom grace leads arrive at rest in Christ, but it is through the wood and through the slough. Once more, I remarked another path, which came in from the farmer's fields, through lands where the plough and the sickle are busy, each in its season ; so that those who come from that quarter to worship come across the place of toil and may fitly represent those who are full of earnestness and effort, but have as much need of Jesus as any. They do not know yet the way of salvation, but they follow after righteousness by the law, and strive to enter in at the strait gate in their own strength. But if they ever come to Christ they will have to leave those fields and the plough and sickle of their own strength, and submit to receive Jesus as their all.

Now, do not suppose that the tracks which I have mentioned are the only ones. There is only one Christ, but many are the quarters from which men come to him. It would be impossible to describe all the ways by which men come to Christ, and all the quarters from which they come. To our first believings we are all led by the Spirit of God, but very singular are the experiences of God's people, and perhaps each man has a road peculiar to himself. We do not know all the ways by which souls arrive at Christ ; but there is this mercy, he knows the ways by which his redeemed are coming to him, and he knows where they are. I recollect being at Wootton-under-Edge in Mr. Hills' garden, and being informed that on the Sabbath morning the quaint old gentleman would go into his garden and watch the people coming to the meeting-house. He would sit in his garden with his telescope, in the centre of an amphitheatre of hills, and observe the country people coming down, and notice any peculiar action, and mention it in his sermon, very much to the astonishment of the persons concerned. Our Lord Jesus sitting in the centre to which his redeemed are coming sees them all, even when they are yet a great way off. If we can conceive a soul millions of miles off from him, as far off as a comet is gone from the sun when it wanders to its utmost tether, yet our Lord Jesus Christ knows where the wanderer comes from, and notes the time when the turning begins, and the hour when the face is set towards himself. He can spy out grace in a man's heart long before the man himself is conscious of it, and long before the most hopeful minister in the world could see a trace of divine life in the soul. What a mercy this is ! They come to him from every quarter, and he knows where they come from, and how far they are on the road.

Let us pray for all who are coming to Christ as well as for those who have actually laid hold upon him :—" Lord Jesus, we pray thee help those who are coming thy way. Draw them till they come nearer. Far away as they are, yet make them nigh." We do not always know when men are coming, but when we do perceive some little desire in that direction let us imitate the great Father in the parable, and run to meet them, and see if we can help them on the journey.

Perhaps they need another stepping stone to be placed for them, and we may drop one where their feet can reach it, or like Help in the "Pilgrim's Progress" we may help them out from the slough into which they have slipped. Do this for Christ's sake.

Remember, that of all who come to Christ from every quarter, never one was disappointed with him yet. They come from various regions, drawn by the hope that Jesus will supply their needs, and he does supply them. All sorts of people who come to Christ believingly find in him all that is needed to meet their peculiar cases. Sweet also is the thought that he never casts out a coming sinner come from where he may. They arrive from different quarters, but he has no prejudice against Galilee or Judea, or Tyre or Sidon : he receives all comers. The elder in the Book of Revelation asked a deeply interesting question, "Whence came they?" and, blessed be God, it is one which will never be answered to the prejudice of any one who draws near to Jesus by faith. O sinners, you may come from the thieves' kitchen, or from the convicts' cell, you are as welcome to Jesus as those who come from homes of virtue. You may come from the seat of the scorner, you may come from the bench of the drunkard, and if you come you shall receive a hearty welcome. You, too, O hopeful ones, may come from the home of piety, and from the school of truth, and when you come you will find the gates set wide open to receive you. Come from the tents of Jacob, or from the tents of Kedar, from the holy mountain or from the lonely wilderness, and you shall alike find that he will in no wise cast you out.

It is a very pleasant reflection to us that when needy souls draw near to Jesus they cause him no sorrow, but rather bring him joy. All his redeeming work is done, he has only to receive the recompense due to him. They come, says one, with the burden of their sins, and lay them upon him. I answer, this is only true in a certain sense, and must not be misunderstood. It is a great joy to think that no burden can come on our Lord's shoulders now, no man can lay sin upon Christ any more ; it was laid on him by the Father long ago, and, since he has made full atonement for it, not a particle of it remains. Each redeemed one has cost Christ his life already, and therefore as each one actually comes he costs him nothing, on the contrary, he sees in each one the recompense for the travail of his soul. If we saw sinners coming by thousands to Christ, and knew that he would have to bear the chastisement of their peace, and be bruised again for their iniquities, we might well be sorrowful, but it is not so : he has finished the atoning work ; agony and pain are all over, and now, as the redeemed come to him, they gladden his heart, they increase his praise, they reward his pains. Oh that they would come in troops, like the flocks of Carmel for number. I may say in rustic language "the more the merrier" ; let them gather from every quarter, each one bringing with him a crown of love for the Redeemer's brow.

Brethren, there is no fear that the multitudes will cease to come from every quarter. The Greek work might be rendered "They kept on coming to him from every quarter." Even thus it is now. They are coming, they always will be coming, there will never be a time when they will not come. In the prophetic words of the twenty-second Psalm we are told that "they shall come." We fall into a dull state at times,

and but few are converted, yet the Lord revives us by his Spirit, and thousands are saved. We had notable evangelists among us preaching the gospel, and some persons imagined that when they were gone we should see no more of the work, but it is not so; sinners are still coming to Jesus, and they will come. The question for each one of my hearers is this—Am I coming, or have I come to Jesus? They came from every quarter,—have I come? You strangers from beyond the sea, you good people from the country, are *you* coming to Jesus? You Londoners, who regularly hear the gospel in this house, are *you* coming? You who only occasionally listen to it, are you coming to Jesus? God grant that it may be said this morning of this mixed assembly, they came to Jesus from every quarter!

III. Thirdly, since coming to Christ is not a matter for once in your life, and the Scripture says plainly, "Unto whom coming," to show us that the Christian is always coming to Christ, we will therefore follow out our point in reference to THE DAILY COMINGS OF SAVED SOULS TO JESUS. Here, too, they come to him from every quarter. Let us think a minute. This morning the desire of every renewed soul here has been to come to Christ, and I hope that desire has been fulfilled to us all. If so, we have come to him from every quarter. You who are very poor have forgotten your poverty this morning, and found exceeding great riches in him; and, on the other hand, I trust that you who are wealthy have forgotten your worldly treasure, and rejoiced to be only rich in him. If you have had a trying week, a perplexing week, a week of losses and crosses, you have nevertheless approached him from that quarter, and found him a sure solace for your cares. Another has had a week of prosperity and success, but you too have not been content till you could leave the best things of earth to embrace the Lord from heaven. From all points of experience you have come. Among the number of God's people here this morning who have had communion with Christ, what a variety of outward circumstances would be found in the quarters from which they have come.

Men come to our Lord from every quarter as to mental pursuits. The great student, the critic, the profound mathematician, the acute philosopher, all these when taught of the Holy Spirit delight to come to Jesus for rest. I am sure I speak their mind when I say it is a great relief on Sabbath-day to have done with passing problems and feed upon the simplicities of Jesus. I have heard say that men of great mind when they come to hear a sermon, if they detect an attempt at something very fine on the part of the preacher, and meet with displays of mere intellect, they turn away disappointed, and say, "We have had enough of this all the week." The Sabbath is a day of rest, and that minister breaks the Sabbath in spirit who leads the people into the bondage of human wisdom instead of setting before them the Lord Jesus, in whom alone they can find rest unto their souls. There are a few, blessed be God, who come to Jesus from the quarter of human culture, and are delighted to come, and these find more in Jesus Christ simply preached than the most capacious mind can take in. Blessed be God, thousands who are not philosophers or mathematicians are doing the same; their thoughts are not very deep or penetrating, but they come to Christ in deed and of a truth, and receive him gladly. It is

astonishing what a deal of Christ some very ignorant people can take in. Converse with a godly old shepherd; the man may scarcely know his letters, but hear how he speaks of divine things. Go and sit with a poor Christian woman in her cottage, who never went beyond the village, and never will unless an inhospitable sect should forbid her bones to be laid in the public graveyard with rites congenial, but she knows her Saviour, and many a memorable fact will she tell you concerning him! These grace-taught saints know more about Christ, though the world calls them ignorant, than the most learned men can possibly know by human teaching. Thus you see they come to Jesus Christ from every quarter of mental condition.

And I thank God they come to Christ from all points of theological thought. My brother over yonder who loves the eternal purposes, how readily he comes to Jesus from considering the covenant and the everlasting decrees of grace. It is pleasant to come over the eternal hills to Jesus. My other friend over yonder does not love this way; I wish he did; he dwells mainly upon the responsibility of man, and upon the great love of God to all mankind; yet he comes to Jesus across the plains of infinite benevolence, and delights to see in Jesus the sinner's all in all. John Wesley sings—

"Jesus, lover of my soul."

And Toplady, who viewed things from another point of view, sings—

"Rock of ages, cleft for me."

They come from every quarter. Thank God that it is so; different lines of thought about the truth meet in Jesus, even as all great railways meet in London.

I trust we have come to Christ from every quarter of our own spiritual experience. We have been cast into the deeps, but "out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord, and thou heardest me." Upon the heights also we have stood, but there we have sung, "Thou makest my feet like hinds' feet; thou makest me to stand upon my high places." We have exulted in God and we have comforted ourselves in God; we have delighted ourselves in the light of his countenance, and we have also rejoiced under the shadow of his wings. From all quarters of emotion we have turned to the Beloved of our souls.

So from different characteristics of mind have souls come to Christ. Mary is contemplative, and for her there is a seat at the Master's feet. Peter is active, and for him there are sheep to be fed and lambs to be tended. In our Lord persons of various dispositions can all find what they need. The loving mind which dives deep, and is a little inclined to the mystic school, can find in Jesus the fullest scope, even as Madame Guyon did. Warm hearts need no other fuel for their flame than the love of Jesus: see how that theme kept George Herbert in a perpetual glow. And you, too, my brother, active and energetic, you who spend, and are spent in philanthropic works and deeds of devotion to God, you find in Jesus Christ all that can sustain your ardour and sanctify your activities. From every quarter saints come to our Lord as to a living well, and never come in vain. It makes my Lord so much the more precious to me when I remember that he is so precious to multitudes of others. 'Tis true he is so necessary and so satisfying to my own soul that he seems

as if he had been prepared on purpose for me ; infinite wisdom could not devise a Saviour who suited my case more fully ; it does, however, increase my joy in him that thousands and tens of thousands think the same, each one for himself. Tradition says of the manna that it tasted just as every man desired, and was grateful to every palate ; it is so with the bread of heaven, it has a choice adaptation to each believer's need, and a fulness to supply the necessities of each tried heir of the kingdom. You may have a whole Christ to yourself and yet millions of happy spirits are doing the same, and living upon his inexhaustible stores. Rejoice, my brethren, in this, for to the generous heart this piles up the ecstasy and gives us heaven upon heaven in the fact that so vast a number find their all in Jesus as well as ourselves. Not only do we come to him, but grace brings other believers to him from every quarter.

Let it be one of our aims always to be path-makers, to clear the ways for our brethren to come nearer to our Lord. When we see them coming from the wood let us show them the way over the stile ; or if they find it hard to climb the steep ascent from the valley let us lend them a hand. If we fear that they are too high up let us show them the way down by walking humbly ourselves. Wherever they are let it be our endeavour to bring them to Christ. Our Lord Jesus is the common meeting place of saints, let us commune with all who commune with him. Let us maintain holy intercourse with those who love him, and we shall be blessed thereby. My brother knows something about my Lord that I do not, and I know something about him which he has not yet learned, and therefore we can aid each other by holy intercourse. In the olden time "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," and I know it was good talk, for God himself hearkened to it. It is said that "the Lord hearkened and heard," and he thought so much of what was spoken that he made a volume of it, "and a book of memorial was written for them that feared the Lord and thought upon his name."

IV. Lastly, brethren, my text is true of THAT GREAT GATHERING WHICH IS APPROACHING NEARER EVERY MOMENT, and which will be complete when

"All the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne,
Shall bless the conduct of his grace
And make his wonders known."

Saints come to Jesus in glory from every quarter. He is the centre of the church. Many have reached the Lord up yonder, and are now bowing before his throne. Men of every age are there, from Adam to Moses, from Joshua to the time of the kings and the prophets ; and even to this hour they continue to come to him. They come from every quarter of the globe and from every race and tribe. What a gathering it must be ! Heaven is cosmopolitan, and Christ has abolished all distinction between Jew and Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free : they all meet in him, and he is all and in all. What a mixed company, and yet how uniform in their joy and in their satisfaction in him. David said, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in his likeness." You are not David, but you can say the same. Yes, we shall meet in him from every quarter.

The main point to dwell upon is that they, wherever they hail from, all come to *Him*. It is a very pleasant prospect to think of meeting our fellow servants in heaven, but it must never be allowed to bear comparison with the prospect of meeting the Master. Of course we shall see them all. Old John Ryland said most quaintly,

"They all shall be there, the great and the small ;
Poor I shall shake hands with the blessed St. Paul."

and no doubt we shall. Like peers we shall sit in that royal house of lords ; we each one shall take his own seat in that parliament of kings, for he hath "made us kings and priests unto God." What companions we shall have ! What intercourse most high and solemn with the best and purest spirits that ever scattered light over the darkness of this world ! But here is the point, we shall be with *Him*. We shall not care much, I believe, about anything else compared with being with him where he is and beholding his glory. This is heaven to me. We shall come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn ; but then, since Christ is in them all, and they are all members of his body, it will be only another form of coming to him, and will by no means interfere, but rather enlarge, our fellowship with our glorious Head.

I would like to say, just to finish, that I believe this idea of coming to Christ from every quarter is capable of an expansion which I leave for you to think upon, and will not, therefore, explain at length. The day cometh when the Lord Jesus will "gather together in one all things which are in him, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." Then shall he head up all the things which are in him, and these shall come to him from every quarter. Of this his mysterious person is the prophecy and foretaste. Is it not wonderful what a gathering up of everything there is in the person of our blessed Lord ? The material universe has a part in him, for he was born into that flesh and blood which links us to the inanimate matter beneath our feet. With mind in its lower form he is akin, for he had and has a human soul. To spirits he is brother, for he is the head of the spiritual seed. To crown all, with God himself he is one. God, considered in his absolute Godhead, stands alone, and a gulf divides him from all creatures ; but God in Christ Jesus takes the whole sweep of creation into himself, and when you shall behold him in the ages to come, this will more and more clearly appear to you. The glorious Christ of God brings all creation to a focus, and unites it in one, around his person. We shall understand this better by-and-by, meanwhile it is sweet to muse upon it. I saw a scene depicted upon a painted window of the church of St. Etienne, in Lyons, which struck me very much. It represents our Lord after the temptation in the wilderness, when he was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto him. The angels are depicted as bringing him fruits and flagons, and bread and flesh, and making harmony on instruments of music. Above him the sun shines softly upon him. Over his head is a tree bearing fruit, the branches of which seem to bow to him, laden with mellow refreshment. At his foot a little streamlet warbles as it flows, and causes the grass and the wild flowers to flourish around him. While the flowers are blooming for him beneath, tender doves above him are cooing with

delight, and birds of the air are pausing to sing to him. A gentle fawn is fearlessly drinking of the brook close to his hand, while a lion humbly lying down before him is paying him homage. A rabbit is feeding at ease hard by the wild beast; everything is happy, peaceful, and at home. The angels and the rabbits, the lion and the gazelle, the heavens above and the flowers beneath, all meet in him; even the sun seems to have himself become a heliotrope, and turns to the yet greater light. Jesus is the centre of them all. I admire the artist's thought; it has truth within it. Our Lord has blessed and consecrated the very earth, for it felt the impress of his holy feet, and the water of the river is no longer common or unclean, for was he not buried in baptism therein? Every sunbeam is now gracious, for the sun has looked on HIM. The lower creatures too are to be treated tenderly, for *he* loved them; they came to him from the time when the oxen fed from his manger where he lay as a babe to the day when the ass was not divided from her foal when he rode through the streets of Jerusalem. Let us treat all things reverently, for he condescended to think of them all. From the angels down to the waves of the sea, and the clay of which he made healing ointment, all things in their spheres ministered upon him, and so they came to him from every quarter; and the day cometh when the creatures emancipated from the bondage to which they have been unwillingly subjected, shall find redemption in him. (Rom. viii. 21.) To him shall they come from every quarter, as many as are in him, and both the lowest material and the loftiest spirit shall rejoice in the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Then shall dragons and all deeps, mountains and all hills, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl, kings of the earth and all people, praise the name of the Lord; while the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, angels, and sun and moon, and stars of light shall magnify his glory. Then shall the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark i. 9 to end.

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LOVE'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 11TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"We love him, because he first loved us."—1 John iv. 19.

VERY simple words, but very full of meaning. I think I might say of this sentence what the poet says of prayer: it is "the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try," and yet it is one of the "sublimest strains that reach the majesty on high." Take a little believing child and ask her why she loves the Saviour, and she will reply at once, "Because he loved me and died for me:" then ascend to heaven where the saints are perfect in Christ Jesus and put the same question, and with united breath the whole choir of the redeemed will reply, "He hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." When we begin to love Christ we love him because he first loved us; and when we grow in grace till we are capable of the very highest degree of spiritual understanding and affection, we still have no better reason for loving him than this, "Because he first loved us."

This morning, in trying to preach from the text, I would pray the Holy Spirit that every person here may first *feel* it. It is wonderful the difference between a text read and heard and a text felt within the soul. Oh, that you this morning may be able to say from your hearts because you cannot help saying it, "*We love him.*" If I were to say no more, but sit down in silence, and if you were all to spend the next three quarters of an hour in exercising the emotion of love to God it would be time most profitably spent. It is beyond measure beneficial to the soul to take her fill of love with the Lord Jesus; it is the sweet cure for all her ailments for her to have leisure to delight herself in the Lord, and faith enough to dwell at ease in his perfections. Be sure, then, to let your hearts have room, and scope, and opportunity for indulging and inflaming the sacred passion of love to God. If the second part of the text shall also be made equally vivid to you by the power of faith—"He first loved us,"—your hearts will be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. If the exceeding love of God in Christ Jesus shall be shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit, you will want no sermon from me: Nos. 1,299-1,300.

your inward experience will be better than any discourse. May your love, like a drop of dew, be exhaled and carried up into the boundless heaven of God's love; may your heart ascend to the place where your treasure is, and rest itself upon the heart of God. Blessed shall you be if in your hearts Christ's love and yours shall both be fully known and felt at this moment. O, blessed Spirit, cause it to be so. Thus should we have the text in action, and that is a thousand times better than the mere quiet letter. If you have visited the picture galleries at Versailles, where you see the wars of France from the earliest ages set forth in glowing colours upon the canvas, you cannot but have been struck with the pictures, and interested in the terrible scenes. Upstairs in the same palace there is a vast collection of portraits. I have traversed those galleries of portraits without much interest, only here and there pausing to notice a remarkable countenance. Very few persons linger there, everybody seems to walk on as quickly as the polished floors allow. Now, why is it that you are interested by the portraits downstairs and not by those upstairs? They are the same people; very many of them in the same dress; why do you not gaze upon them with interest? The reason lies here: the portrait in still life, as a rule, can never have the attraction which surrounds a scene of stirring action. There you see the warrior dealing a terrible blow with his battle axe, or the senator delivering himself of an oration in the assembly, and you think more of them than of the same bodies and faces in repose. Life is impressive; action awakens thought. It is just so with the text. Look at it as a matter of doctrinal statement; "We love him, because he first loved us," and if you are a thoughtful person you will consider it well; but feel the fact itself, feel the love of God, know it within our own souls, and manifest it in our lives, and how engrossing it becomes. May it be so by the power of the Holy Spirit this morning; may you be loving God while you are hearing, and may I be loving him intensely while I am preaching.

With this as an introduction, I shall use the text for four purposes; first, for *doctrinal instruction*; then for *experimental information*; thirdly, for *practical direction*; and fourthly, for *argumentative defence*.

I. We shall use the text briefly for **DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTION**; and one point of doctrinal instruction is very clear, namely, that *God's love to his people is first*. "He first loved us." Now, make sure of this point of doctrine, because forgetfulness about it is connected with much error, and with more ignorance. The love of God to us precedes our love to God. According to Scripture it must be first in the most eminent sense, because it is eternal. The Lord chose his people in Christ Jesus from before the foundations of the world, and to each one of his people that text may be applied,—*"Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love."* His mercy is from everlasting to them that fear him. From all eternity the Lord looked upon his people with an eye of love, and as nothing can be before eternity, his love was *first*. Certainly he loved us before we had a being, for did he not give his Son to die for us nearly nineteen hundred years ago, long before our infant cries had saluted our mother's ear? He loved us before we had any desire to be loved by him, yea when we were provoking him to his face, and displaying the fierce enmity of our unrenewed hearts. Remember "his great love wherewith he loved us

even when we were dead in sin." "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." When we had not as yet one throb of spiritual feeling, one pulse of hope, or one breathing of desire, the Lord loved us even then.

The love of God is before our seeking; he draws us before we run after him. We do not seek that love; that love seeks us. We wander further and further from it, resist it, and prove ourselves unworthy of it: such are our nature and our practice, that they offer nothing congenial to divine love, but the love of God arises in its freeness and stays our mad career by its power over the conscience and the will. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," is the voice of sovereign grace; let our response be, "By the grace of God we are what we are."

The Lord's love is before any repentance on our part. Impenitent sinners never would repent if God did not love them first. The Lord hates sin, but yet he loves sinners; he compassionately loved us when sin was pleasant to us, when we rolled it under our tongue as a sweet morsel, when neither the thunders of his law nor the wooings of his gospel could persuade us to turn from it. When in our bosoms there were no convictions of sin, when there were no evangelical lamentations because of offences against a gracious God, he loved us then. To-day brethren we are possessors of faith in Jesus Christ, but our faith in Jesus Christ did not come before his love; on the contrary, our faith rests in what that love has done for us of old. When we were unbelieving and hard of heart, and resisted the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and put from us the word of eternal life, even then the Lord pitied us, and had mercy upon us; and continued still to invite, still to entreat, still to persuade, till at last the happy hour came when we believed and entered into a sense of his love. There are many things about you now, beloved of the Lord, which are the objects of divine approbation, but they were not there at first; they did not precede divine love, but are the fruits of it. To use an old English word which has somewhat lost its meaning, the love of God is *preventing* love—it goes before any right motions of the soul, and in order of time it is *first*, before any desires, wishes, aspirations, or prayers on our part. Are you this day devout? Yet he loved you not at the first because you were devout, for originally you were not so: his love was first before your devotion. Are you this day holy? Blessed be his name for it; but he loved you when you were unholy; your holiness follows upon his love, he chose you that you might be holy. You are becoming like him by the sanctifying influences of his blessed Spirit, and he loves his image in you, but he loved you when that image was not there; yea he looked on you with infinite compassion when you were heirs of wrath even as others, and the image of the devil was conspicuous both upon your character and your nature. However early in life you began to love the Lord, his love was first. This is very wonderful, but blessed be his name, we know that it is true, and we rejoice in it.

The fact is that the love of God, as far as we know anything about it, had no reason derived from us upon which to ground itself. He loved us because he would love us, or, as our Lord put it, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." He had reasons in his own nature, good reasons, fetched from the best conceivable place, namely from his own perfections; but those reasons he has not been pleased to commu-

nicate to us. He bids us know that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. Thus he tries the loyal submissiveness of our hearts, and I trust we are able to bow in reverent silence to his righteous will.

Divine love is its own cause, and does not derive its streams from anything in us whatsoever. It flows spontaneously from the heart of God, finding its deep wellsprings within his own bosom. This is a great comfort to us, because, being uncreated, it is unchangeable. If it had been set upon us because of some goodness in us, then when the goodness was diminished the love would diminish too. If God had loved us second and not first, or had the cause of the love been in us, that cause might have altered, and the supposed effect, namely, his love, would have altered too; but now, whatever may be the believer's condition to-day, however he may have wandered, and however much he may be groaning under a sense of sin, the Lord declares, "I do earnestly remember him still." The Lord did not love you at first because you had no sin; he foreknew all the sin you ever would have, it was all present before his sacred mind, and yet he loved you, and he loves you still. "I am God; I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." O blessed love of God, since thou art first we will give thee the first place in our thoughts, the highest throne in our hearts, the royal position in our souls; glorifying thee, for thou art first!

Another part of the doctrine of the text is this, that *the love of God is the cause of our love to God*. A thing may be first and another second, and yet the first may not be the cause of the second, there may be no actual link between the two: but here we have it unmistakably, "We love him *because* he first loved us"; which signifies not merely that this is the motive of which we are conscious in our love, but that this is the force, the divine power, which created love in us. I put it to you, should we have loved God had he not first given his Son to die for us? Had there been no redeeming sacrifice should we have had any love to God? Unredeemed men, left to go on like fallen angels in their sin, would have had no more love to God than fallen angels have. How could they? But the Son given to redeem is the great foundation of love. God gives his Son, and so reveals his own love and creates ours. Is not his love seen to be the cause of ours when we remember Calvary?

But he might have given his Son to die for men, beloved, and yet you and I might not have loved him, because we might not have been aware of the great fact. It is no small grace on God's part that "to you is the word of this salvation sent." While the heathen have never heard it, by the arrangement of his gracious providence you have been favoured with the good news. You have it in your homes in the form of the Holy Scriptures, you hear it every Sabbath day from the pulpit. How would you have ever come to love him if he had not sent his gospel to you? The gift of his Son Jesus, and the providence which leads the herald of mercy to the saved one's door, are evident causes of man's love to God. But more than this, Christ died and the gospel is preached, and yet some men do not love him. Why not? Because of the hardness of their hearts. But others do love him: shall I trace this to the natural betterness of their hearts? I dare not, and much as do they. There is no believer who would ask me to do so in his

own case; but I must trace it to the influence of the Holy Spirit, going with the revelation of the love of God in Christ Jesus, affecting the heart, and creating faith and love and every grace in the soul. Beloved, if you love God, it is with no love of yours, but with the love which he has planted in your bosoms. Unrenewed human nature is a soil in which love to God will not grow. There must be a taking away of the rock, and a supernatural change of the barren ground into good soil, and then, as a rare plant from another land, love must be planted in our hearts and sustained by power divine, or else it never will be found there. There is no love to God in this world that is of the right kind except that which was created and formed by the love of God in the soul.

Put the two truths together, that the love of God is first, and that the love of God is the cause of our love, and I think you will be inclined henceforth to be believers in what are commonly called the doctrines of grace. To me it is very wonderful that they are not received by all churches, because they are practically acknowledged by all Christians on their knees. They may preach as they like, but they all pray according to the doctrines of grace; and those doctrines are so consistent with the Christian's experience, that it is notable that the older a believer becomes, and the more deeply he searches into divine truth, the more inclined he is to give the whole of the praise of his salvation to the grace of God, and to believe in those precious truths which magnify, not the free will of man, but the free grace of the Ever Blessed. I want no better statement of my own doctrinal belief than this, "We love him, because he first loved us." I know it has been said that he loved us on the foresight of our faith and love and holiness. Of course the Lord had a clear foresight of all these, but remember that he had also the foresight of our want of love, and our want of faith, and our wanderings, and our sins, and surely his foresight in one direction must be supposed to operate as well as his foresight in the other direction. Recollect also that God himself did not foresee that there would be any love to him in us arising out of ourselves, for there never has been any, and there never will be; he only foresaw that we should believe because he gave us faith, he foresaw that we should repent because his Spirit would work repentance in us, he foresaw that we should love, because he wrought that love within us; and is there anything in the foresight that he means to give us such things that can account for his giving us such things? The case is self-evident—his foresight of what he means to do cannot be his reason for doing it. His own eternal purpose has made the gracious difference between the saved and those who wilfully perish in sin. Let us give all the glory to his holy name, for to him all the glory belongs. His preventing grace must have all the honour.

II. Secondly, we shall use the text FOR EXPERIMENTAL INFORMATION; and here, first, we learn that *all true believers love God*. "We love him," and we all love him for one reason, "because he first loved us." All the children of God love their Father. I do not say that they all feel an equal love, or that they all feel as much love as they should: who among us does? I will not say that they do not sometimes give cause to doubt their love; nay, I will urge that it is well

for them to examine themselves even as Christ examined Peter, and said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" But there is love in the heart of every true-born child of God; it is as needful to spiritual life as blood is to natural life. Rest assured there has never been born into the kingdom of God one solitary individual destitute of love to God. You may be deficient in some virtues (you should not be), but yet the root of the matter may be in you; but if you be without love you are as a sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal, and whatever your outer works, though you give your body to be burned, and all your goods to feed the poor, yet, if there be no love to God in your soul, the mark of God's sheep is not upon you, and your spot is not the spot of his children. Rest assured that whosoever is born of God loveth God.

Observe carefully *the kind of love which is essential to every Christian*—"We love him, because he first loved us." Much has been said about disinterested love to God; there may be such a thing, and it may be very admirable, but it is not mentioned here. I trust, beloved, we know what it is to love God because of his superlative excellence and goodness, and surely the more we know him the more we shall love him for what he is, but yet unless we love him because he first loved us, whatever other sort of love we may have or think we have, it does not prove us to be children of God. This is the love we must have; the other form of love, if it be true, will grow up in us afterwards; that however, is not essential, nor need we exalt it unduly: loving God because he first loved us is a sufficient evidence of grace in the soul. Gratitude has been vilified as a mean virtue, but indeed it is a noble emotion, and is one of the most forcible of spiritual motives. Let a man love God admiringly because of what he is, but yet there must run side by side with it this grateful love of God, because he first loved him, or else he lacks that which John says is to be found in all the saints. Beloved, do not vex yourselves about any supposed higher degrees, but see to it that you love him because he first loved you. You may not be able to rise into those heights into which others of your brethren have ascended because you are as yet only a babe in grace; but you are safe enough, if your love be of this simple character, that it loves because it is loved.

Within this humble form of love which is so essential, there dwells a gracious sense of unworthiness, so needful to a true Christian. We feel that we did not deserve the love which God sheds upon us, and this humility we must have, or we lack one mark of a child of God. There is also in this lowly form of gracious affection a clear recognition of the fact that the Lord's love is graciously bestowed, and this also is essential to a Christian, and becomes to him the main source of his obedience and affection. If a man only loves me as much as I deserve to be loved, I do not feel under any very strong obligations, and consequently do not feel any very intense gratitude, but because the Lord's love is all of pure grace and comes to us as utterly undeserving ones, therefore we love him in return. See whether such a humble, grateful love towards God dwells in your hearts, for it is a vital point.

Love to God wherever it is found is a sure evidence of the salvation of its possessor. If you love the Lord in the sense described, then he loved you first, and loves you now. You want no other evidence but this to assure yourself that you abide in the love of God—that you love him.

was told by a venerable brother some little time ago a story of our famous preacher, Robert Hall. He charmed the most learned by the majesty of his eloquence, but he was as simple as he was great, and he was never happier than when conversing with poor believers upon experimental godliness. He was accustomed to make his journeys on horseback, and having been preaching at Clipstone he was on his way home, when he was stopped by a heavy fall of snow at the little village of Sibbertoft. The good man who kept the "Black Swan," a little village hostelry, came to his door and besought the preacher to take refuge beneath his roof, assuring him that it would give him great joy to welcome him. Mr. Hall knew him to be one of the most sincere Christians in the neighbourhood, and therefore got off his horse and went into the little inn. The good man was delighted to provide for him a bed, and a stool, and a candlestick in the prophet's chamber, for that rustic inn contained such an apartment. After Mr. Hall had rested awhile by the fire the landlord said, "You must needs stop here all night, sir; and if you do not mind I will call in a few of my neighbours, and if you feel that you could give us a sermon in my taproom they will all be glad to hear you." "So let it be, sir," said Mr. Hall, and so it was: the taproom became his cathedral, and the "Black Swan" the sign of the gospel banner. The peasants came together, and the man of God poured out his soul before them wondrously. They would never forget it, for to hear Mr. Hall was an event in any man's life. After all were gone Mr. Hall sat down, and there came over him a fit of depression: out of which he strove to rise by conversation with his host. "Ah, sir," said the great preacher, "I am much burdened, and am led to question my own condition before God. Tell me now what you think is a sure evidence that a man is a child of God." "Well, Mr. Hall," said the plain man, "I am sorry to see you so tried; you doubt yourself, but nobody else has any doubt about you. I hope the Lord will cheer and comfort you, but I am afraid I am not qualified to do it." "Never mind, friend, never mind, tell me what you think the best evidence of a child of God?" "Well, I should say, sir," said he, "*if a man loves God* he must be one of God's children." "Say you so," said the mighty preacher, "then it is well with me," and at that signal he began to magnify the Lord at such a rate that his hearer afterwards said that it was wonderful to hear him, as for about an hour he went on with glowing earnestness, declaring the loveliness of God. "O sir," said he who told the tale, "you should have heard him. He said, 'Love God, sir. Why I cannot help loving him, how could I do otherwise?' And then he went on to speak about the Almighty and his love and grace, extolling the Lord's greatness, and goodness, and glory in redemption, and all that he did for his people, till he said, 'Thank you, thank you, my friend, if love to him is an evidence of being God's child, I know I have it, for I cannot help loving him. I take no credit to myself; he is such a lovely being, and has done so much for us, that I should be more brutish than any man if I did not love and adore him.'" That which cheered that good and great man's heart may, perhaps, cheer yours. If you are loving God you must have been loved of God: true love could not have come into your heart in any other conceivable way; and you may rest assured that you are the object of his eternal choice.

But oh, *if you do not love God, dear hearer, I invite you to think for a minute upon your state!* Hear of God and not love him? You must be blind. Know anything about his character and not adore him? Your heart must be like the heart of Nabal when it was turned into a stone. See God in Christ bleeding on the cross for his enemies and not love him! O Hell, thou canst not be guilty of a worse offence than this! Herein is love, shall it have no acknowledgment? It is said that a man cannot feel that he is loved without in some measure returning the flame: but what shall I say of a mind which beholds Christ's love but feels no love in return? It is brutish, it is devilish. God have mercy upon it. Breathe you the same prayer, O unloving heart, and say, "Lord, forgive me, and by thy Holy Spirit renew me, and give me henceforth to be able to say, 'I also in my humble fashion love God because he first loved me.'"

III. Thirdly, we shall use the text as a matter OF PRACTICAL DIRECTION. I earnestly trust that there are some here who, although they do not love God at present, yet desire to do so. Well, dear friend, *the text tells you how to love God.* You say, perhaps, "Oh, I shall love God when I have improved my character, and when I have attended to the external duties of religion." But are you going to get love to God out of yourself? Is it there, then? "No," say you. How, then, will you get it from where it is not? You may go often to an empty iron safe before you will bring a thousand pound note out of it, and you may look a long time to your own heart before you will bring out of it a love to God which is not there. What is the way by which a heart may be made to love God? The text shows us the method of the Holy Spirit. He reveals the love of God to the heart, and then the heart loves God in return. If, then, you are aroused this morning to desire to love God, use the method which the text suggests,—meditate upon the great love of God to man, especially upon this, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." See clearly that you have by faith to trust your soul with Christ, and perceive that it is vast love which sets before you such a way of salvation in which the only thing required of you is that you be nothing, and trust Christ to be everything, and even that faith he gives you as a gift of his Spirit, so that the plan of salvation is all of love. If you want to repent, do not so much consider your sin as the love of Jesus in suffering for your sin; if you desire to believe, do not so much study the doctrine as study the person of Jesus Christ upon the cross, and if you desire to love, think over perpetually, till it breaks your heart, the great love of Jesus Christ in laying down his life for his worthless foes. The love of God is the birth-place of holy love. Not there in your hearts where you are attempting a absurdly impossible feat, namely, to create love in the carnal mind

which cannot be reconciled to God ; but there in the heart of Jesus must love be born, and then it shall come down to you. You cannot force your mind into the condition of believing even a common thing, nor can you sit there and say, "I will love so and so," of whom you know nothing. Faith and love are second steps arising out of former steps. "Faith cometh by hearing," and love comes by contemplation ; it flows out of a sense of the love of Christ in the soul even as wine flows from the clusters in the wine-press. Go thou to the fragrant mystery of redeeming love, and tarry with it till in those beds of spices thine own garments shall be made to smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia. There is no way of sweetening thyself but by tasting the sweetness of Jesus Christ ; the honey of his love will make thy whole nature to be as a honeycomb, every cell of thy manhood shall drop sweetness.

Brethren, if we wish to sustain the love we have received, we must do the same thing. At the present moment you are loving God, and desire still to love him ; be wise, then, and feed love on love, it is its best food. This is the honey which will keep your sweetness sweet ; this is the fire which will keep your flame flaming. Could we be separated from the love of Christ our love would die out like a lamp in yonder streets when cut off from the main. He who quickened us into the life of love must keep us alive, or we shall become loveless and lifeless.

And if, perchance, your love has grown somewhat cold ; if you long to revive it, do not begin by doubting God's love to you ; that is not the way of reviving but of weakening love. Believe in divine love, my brother, over the head of the coldness of your heart ; trust in Jesus Christ as a sinner if you cannot rejoice in him as a saint, and you will get your love back again. You see the flowing fountain, how it gushes with a constant stream ; and here I bring a pitcher and set it down, so that the stream rushes into it and fills it till it overflows. In this manner our souls ought to be filled with the love of Christ. But you have taken away your pitcher, and it has become empty, and now you say to yourself, "Alas, alas, there is nothing here ! What shall I do ? This pitcher is empty." Do ? Why do what you did at first ; go and set it under the flowing stream, and it will soon be full again ; but it will never get full by your removing it into a dry place. Doubting is the death of love ; only by the hand of faith can love be fed with the bread of heaven. Your tears will not fill it ; you may groan into it, but sighs and moans will not fill it ; only the flowing fountain can fill the vacuum. Believe thou that God loves thee still : even if thou be not a saint, believe thou in the mighty love of Christ towards sinners, and trust thyself with him, and then his love will come pouring in till thy heart is full again to overflowing. If you want to rise to the very highest state of love to Christ, if you desire

to enjoy delights ecstastic, or to be perfectly consecrated, if you aim at an apostle's self-denial, or at a martyr's heroism, or if you would be as like to Christ as the spirits are in heaven, no tool can grave you to this image but love, no force can fashion you to the model of Christ Jesus but the love of Jesus Christ shed abroad in your soul by the Holy Ghost. Keep to this, then, as a matter of practical direction. Dwell in the love of God to you that you may feel intense love to God.

Once more, as a practical direction, *if you love God show it as God showed his love to you.* You cannot do so in the same degree, but you may in the same manner. God loved the worthless; love ye the worthless. God loved his enemies; love ye your enemies. The Lord loved them practically: love not in word only, but in deed and in truth. He loved them to self-sacrifice, so that Jesus gave himself for us: love ye to self-sacrifice also. Love God so that you could die a thousand deaths for him: love him till you make no provision for the flesh, but live alone for his glory; let your heart burn with a flame that shall consume you till the zeal of God's house shall have eaten you up. "We love him, *because* he first loved us," therefore let us love him as he loved us; let his love be both motive and model to us.

"Lov'd of my God, for him again,
With love intense I burn;
Chosen of him ere time began,
I choose him in return."

IV. Our text suggests to us AN ARGUMENTATIVE DEFENCE. You will see what I mean when I observe first, that our love to God seems to want an apology. We have heard of an emperor casting eyes of love upon a peasant girl. It would have been monstrous for her to have first looked up to him as likely to be her husband; everybody would have thought her to be bereft of her senses had she done so; but when the monarch looked down upon her and asked her to be his queen, that was another thing. She might take leave to love from his love. Often does my soul say, "O God, I cannot help loving thee, but may I? Can this poor heart of mine be suffered to send up its love to thee? I, polluted and defiled, nothingness and emptiness and sinfulness, may I say, 'Yet do I love thee, O my God, almighty as thou art'? 'Holy, holy, holy,' is the salutation of the seraphim, but may I say 'I love thee, O my God'?" Yes, I may, because he first loved me. There is love's license to soar so high.

"Yet I may love thee too, O Lord,
Almighty as thou art,
For thou hast stoop'd to ask of me
The love of my poor heart."

Then, again, if any should enquire of us as they did of the spouse,

"What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us? What is this passion that you have for God, this love you bear to his incarnate Son?" we have a conclusive argument as against them, even as we had a quietus for our own fears. We reply, "We love him, because he first loved us, and if you did but know that he loved you, if you did but know that he has done for you what he has done for us, you would love him too. You would not want to ask us why, you would wonder why you do not love him too."

"His love if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world will love him too."

We shall not want to all eternity any other defence for loving God than this, "Because he first loved us."

Here is also an argument for the lover of the old orthodox faith. It has been said by some that the doctrines of grace lead to licentiousness, but our text is a most excellent shield against that attack. Brethren, we believe that the Lord loved us, first, and most freely, not because of our tears or prayers, nor because of our foreseen faith, nor because of anything in us, but *first*. Well, what comes out of that? Do we therefore say, "If he loved us when we were in sin, let us continue in sin that grace may abound," as some have wickedly said? God forbid. The inference we draw is, "We love him, because he first loved us." Some can be swayed to morality by fear, but the Christian is sweetly drawn to holiness by love. We love him, not because we are afraid of being cast into hell if we do not—that fear is gone, we who are justified by God can never be condemned; nor because we are afraid of missing heaven, for the inheritance is entailed upon as many of us as are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Does this blessed security lead us to carelessness? No, but in proportion as we see the greatness and the infinity of the love of God, we love him in return, and that love is the basis of all holiness, and the groundwork of a godly character. The doctrine of grace, though often maligned, has proved in the hearts of those who have believed it to be the grandest stimulus to heroic virtue, and he who affirms otherwise knows not what he says.

Last of all, here is a noble argument to silence a gainsaying world. Do you see what a wonderful text we have here? It is a description of Christianity. Men say they are weary of the old faith, and beg us to advance with the times—how shall we reply to them? They want something better, do they? The philosophers who pander to the age are going to give it a better religion than Christianity! Are they? Let us see. We shall, however, wait very long before their false promises will approximate to fulfilment. Let us rather look at what we we really have already. Our text is a circle. Here is love descending

from heaven down to man, and here is love ascending from man to God, and so the circle is completed. The text treats alone of love. We love the Lord, and he loves us. The text resembles Anacreon's harp, which resounded love alone. Here is no word of strife, selfishness, anger, or envy; all is love, and love alone. Now, it comes to pass that out of this love between God and his people there grows (see the context of my text) love to men, for "he that loveth God loveth his brother also." The ethical essence of Christianity is love, and the great master doctrine that we preach when we preach Jesus Christ is this—"God has loved us, we love God, and now we must love one another." O ye nations, what gospel do you desire better than this? This it is that will put aside your drums, your cannons, and your swords. When men love God and love each other, what need for all the blood-stained pageantry of war? And this will end your slavery, for who will call his brother his slave when he has learned to love the image of God in every man? Who is he that will oppress and domineer when he has learned to love his God and love the creatures God has made? Behold, Christianity is the Magna Charta of the universe. Here is the true "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," which men will seek for in vain in politics; here is the sacred Communism which will injure no man's rights, but will respect every man's griefs, and succour every man's needs; here is, indeed, the birth principle of the golden age of peace and joy, when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the weaned child shall play on the cockatrice's den. Spread it, then, and let it circulate throughout the whole earth—God's love first, our love to him next, and then the universal love which shuts not out a man of any colour, of any class, or of any name, but calls upon itself to love both God and man, because God is loved.

The Lord bless this meditation to you, by his Spirit, for Christ's sake.
Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John iv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—19, 248, 810.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LIFE'S NEED AND MAINTENANCE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 18TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"None can keep alive his own soul."—Psalm xxii. 29.

WE must commence by noticing the connection, that we may arrive at the first meaning of the words. There is a day coming when the true God will be acknowledged as Lord and God by all mankind, for the twenty-seventh verse tells us—"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." In that day the greatest of men will bow before him. The verse from which we cull our text says: "All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship." The prosperous ones, those who have grown rich and great, shall receive good at the hands of the Saviour, and shall rejoice to adore him as the author of their fatness. Kings shall own him as their King, and lords accept him as their Lord. Then shall not only the riches of life, but the poverty of death also, render him homage, for as men shall go down to the dust of the grave, in their feebleness and weakness they shall look up to him for strength and solace, and shall find it sweet to worship him in death. Men shall know that the keys of death are in his hands. "All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him," and it shall be known all the world over that the issues of life are in the hands of Jesus Christ; they shall understand that he is appointed as Mediator to rule over all mortal things, for the government shall be upon his shoulder; he shall open and no man shall shut, and shut and no man shall open, for it is his sovereign prerogative to kill and to make alive, and "none can keep alive his own soul." I pass on from this meaning with the hopeful belief that this dispensation is not to end, as some suppose, without the conquest of the world to Christ. Surely "all kings shall bow before him, all nations shall serve him." The shame of the cross shall be followed by honour and glory, "men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed." The conviction grows with me every day, the more I read the Scriptures, that the disheartening views of some interpreters are not true, but that ere the whole of prophecy

shall be wrought out into history the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

Leaving this, we come to consider a more spiritual meaning, which we believe to be as truly the sense of the passage as the other. You will notice, if you read the psalm carefully, when you come to its close, that our Saviour seems to delight himself in being made food for the saved ones among the sons of men. In the 26th verse he says, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied." Here he is thinking of the poor among men, to whom he has ever been the source of abounding comfort : to them his gospel has been preached, and thousands of them have found in him food for their souls which has satisfied them, filled their mouths with praise, and made their hearts live for ever. The poor from the highways and hedges feast to the full at his royal table, yea, the blind, and the halt, and the lame, the very beggars of the streets are among his household guests. Christ is very mindful of the poor and needy, he redeems their soul from deceit and violence, and their blood is precious in his sight. Especially do the poor in spirit feed on Jesus ; over them he pronounced the first benediction of the sermo on the mount, and of them he declares "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." What a feast do poor perishing spirits enjoy in Jesus when his flesh becomes to them meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.

Nor is this all the feeding upon Christ, for in the 29th verse we hear of it again. Not only the poor feed upon the bread of heaven, but the great, the rich, and the strong live upon him too : "all they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship," there is no other way of life for them, for "none can keep alive his own soul." The saints, too, when they have grown in grace, when they have supplied their hunger, and are fat and flourishing in the courts of the Lord's house, must still eat of the same heavenly food ; the fat need Jesus as much as the lean, the strong as much as the feeble, for none can do without him, "none can keep alive his own soul." Thus the rich and the poor meet together, and Jesus is the food of them all. The empty and the full alike draw near to the Redeemer's fulness and receive grace for grace.

Among those who feel their need of Jesus there are some of a mournful type of character, who count themselves ready to perish. They dare not number themselves among the meek who shall eat and be satisfied, much less could they think of themselves as the fat upon earth who shall eat and worship, but they stand back from the feast as utterly unworthy to draw near. They dare not believe themselves to be spiritually alive unto God, they reckon themselves among those that go down into the pit, they bear the sentence of death in themselves and are prisoners under bondage through fear. Their sense of sin and personal unworthiness is so conspicuous, and so painful, that they are afraid to claim the privileges of the living in Zion. They fear that their faith is expiring, their love is dying out, their hope is withered, and their joy clean departed. They compare themselves to the smoking flax, and think themselves to be even more offensive than the nauseous smell given forth by the smoking wick. To such comes the word which precedes my text—"They that go down to the dust shall bow before him." Christ shall be worshipped even by them ; their last moments shall be cheered by his presence. When through depression of spirit, through the assaults

of Satan, and through inability to see the work of the Spirit in their souls, they shall be brought so low as to be down to the dust, they shall be lifted up from their misery and made to rejoice in the Lord their Redeemer, who will say unto them,—“Shake thyself from the dust; arise and sit down: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.” When souls are thus brought down they begin to learn for themselves that “none can keep alive his own soul.” A poor broken-hearted spirit knows this, for he fears that the inner life within his soul is at its last gasp, and he is afraid that his faith and love, and all his graces will be as bones scattered at the grave’s mouth, and then he learns what I trust we shall believe at this time without such a painful experience to teach it to us, namely, that none of us can keep our own soul alive, but that we must have food continually from above, and visitations of the Lord to preserve our spirits. Our life is not in ourselves, but in our Lord. Apart from him we could not exist spiritually, even for a moment. We cannot keep our own soul alive as to grace. That is to be the subject of this morning’s meditation, and may the Holy Spirit render it profitable to us!

I. The first point of consideration out of which the rest will come is this—THE INNER LIFE MUST BE SUSTAINED BY GOD.

We are absolutely dependent upon God for the preservation of our spiritual life. We all of us know that none of us can *make* his own soul live. Thou hast destroyed thyself, but thou canst not make thyself to live again. Spiritual life must always be the gift of God; it must come from without, it cannot arise from within. Between the ribs of death life never takes its birth; how could it? Shall the ocean beget fire, or darkness create light? You shall go to the charnel house as long as you please, but, unless the trump of the resurrection shall sound there, the dry bones will remain in their corruption. The sinner is “dead in trespasses and sins,” and he never will have even so much as a right desire towards God, nor a pulse of spiritual life, until Jesus Christ, who is “the resurrection and the life,” shall quicken him. Now, it is important for us to remember that we are as much dependent upon the Lord Jesus and the power of his Spirit for being kept alive as we were for being made alive at the first. “None can keep alive his own soul.” Do you remember when first you hung upon Christ for everything? That same entire dependence must be exercised every day of your life, for there is need of it. You remember your former nakedness, your poverty, your emptiness, your misery, your death apart from Christ; remember that the case is not one whit better if you could now be separated from sin. If now you have any grace, or any holiness, or any love, you derive it entirely from him, and from moment to moment his grace must be continued to you; for if connection between you and Christ should by any possibility be severed, you would cease spiritually to live. That is the truth we want to bring forward.

Here let us remark that this is not at all inconsistent with the undying nature of the spiritual life. When we were born again there was imparted to us a new and higher nature called the spirit. This is a fruit of the Spirit of God, and it can never die; it is an “incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever.” When it is imparted to the soul it makes us partakers of the divine nature, and it keeps us so that the evil

one toucheth us not so as utterly to destroy us. Yet this fact is quite consistent with the assertion that we cannot keep our own soul alive, for though we live it is because the Lord keeps us alive. The new-born nature is safe because the Lord protects it; it survives the deadly influences of the world because the Lord continues to quicken it. Our new nature is united to the person of Christ, and we live because he lives. We are not kept alive by independent power, but by perpetual renewal from the Lord.

This is true of every man living. "None can keep alive his own soul"—no, not one. You young people think, perhaps, that old Christians get on better than you do; you imagine that their experience preserves them, but indeed they cannot keep their own souls alive any more than you can. You tried and tempted ones sometimes look with envy upon those who dwell at ease, as though their spirituality was self-supporting, but no, they cannot keep their own souls alive any more than you can. You know your own difficulties, but you do not know those of others; rest assured, however, that to all men there are these difficulties, and that no man can keep his own soul alive.

This is the truth at all times: at no one moment can we keep ourselves alive. While sitting in this house of prayer you may dream that assuredly you can keep yourself here, but it is not so. You might sin the foulest of sins in your heart while sitting here, and you might grieve the Holy Spirit, and cloud your life for years while worshipping among the people of God. You are not able to keep your own soul alive in your happiest and holiest moments. From your knees you might rise to blaspheme, and from the communion table you might go to the seat of the scorner if you were left to yourself.

"All our strength at once would fail us,
If deserted, Lord, by thee;
Nothing then could aught avail us,
Certain our defeat would be:
Those who hate us
Thenceforth their desire would see."

I seldom find myself so much in danger as when I have been in close communion with God. After the most ecstatic devotion one is hardly prepared for the coarse temptations of this wicked world. When we come down, like Moses from the mount, if we encounter open sin, we are apt to grow indignant and break all the commandments in the vehemence of our wrath. The sudden change from the highest and holiest contemplations to the trifles and vexations of earth subjects the soul to so severe a trial that the poet did well to say—

"We should suspect some danger nigh
When we perceive too much delight."

Even when our delight is of a spiritual kind we are apt to be off our guard after having been filled with it, and then Satan avails himself of the opportunity. We are never safe unless the Lord keeps us. If we could take you, my brethren, place you in the society of saints, give you to keep perpetual Sabbath-day, make every meal a sacrament, and set you nothing to say or do but what should be directly calculated to promote the glory of God, yet even there you could not keep your

own soul alive. Adam in perfection could not keep himself in Paradise, how can his imperfect children be so proud as to rely upon their own steadfastness. Among angels there were those who kept not their first estate, how shall man then hope to stand except he be upheld.

Why is this? How know we that our text is true? We gather arguments from the analogies of nature. We do not find that we can keep our own bodies alive. We need divine preservation, or disease and death will soon make us their prey. We are not self-contained as to this mortal existence, any one of us, nay, not for five minutes can we live upon ourselves. Take away the atmospheric air and who could keep himself alive. The heaving lungs need their portion of air, and if they cannot be satisfied, the man soon becomes a corpse. Deprive us of food, leave us for a week without meat or drink, and see if we can keep our natural soul alive. Take away from us the means of warmth in the time when God's cold rules the year, and death would soon ensue. Now, if the physical life is not to be sustained by itself, much less can the higher and spiritual life; it must have food, it must have the Spirit to sustain it. The Scriptures present to us the figure of a member of the body which dies if severed from the vital organs, and of the branch which is dried up if cut off from the stem. Toplady versifies the thought and sings—

"Quicken'd by thee, and kept alive,
I flourish and bear fruit;
My life I from thy sap derive,
My vigour from thy root.

"I can do nothing without thee;
My strength is wholly thine:
Wither'd and barren should I be,
If sever'd from the vine."

Yonder lamp burns well, but its future shining is dependent upon a fresh supply of oil; the ship in rapid motion borrows force from the continuance of the wind, and the sails hang idle if the gale ceases; the river is full to the bank, but if the clouds should never again pour out their floods it would become a dry trackway. All things depend on others, and the whole upon the Great Supreme: nothing is self-sustained; save God himself no being necessarily exists, and even immortal souls are only so because he has set his seal upon them, and declared that they shall inherit life eternal, or in consequence of sin shall sink into everlasting punishment. Hence we are sure that "none can keep alive his own soul."

But we need not rely upon analogy, we can put the matter to the test. Could any believer among us keep any one of his graces alive? You, perhaps, are a sufferer, and hitherto you have been enabled to be patient: but suppose the Lord Jesus should withdraw his presence from you, and your pains should return again, ah, where will your patience be? Or, I will suppose you are a worker, and you have done great things for the Lord: like Samson you have been exceeding strong; but let the Lord be once withdrawn, and leave you to attempt his work alone, you will soon discover that you are as weak as other men, and will utterly fail. Holy joy, for instance, take that as a specimen: did

you rejoice in the Lord this morning when you woke? It is very sweet to wake up and hear the birds singing within your heart, but you cannot maintain that joy, nay, not even for an hour, do what you will. "All my fresh springs are in thee," my God, and if I am to joy and rejoice thou must anoint me continually with the oil of gladness. Have you not sometimes thought in the morning, "I feel so peaceful and calm, so resigned to the divine will, I think I shall be able to keep up this placid spirit all day long." Perhaps you have done so, and if so I know you have praised God for it; but if you have become perturbed you have learned again that to will is present with you, but how to perform that which you would you find not. Well, if for any one fruit of the Spirit we are dependent upon the Lord, how much more will this be true as to the essential life from which each of these graces springs?

This truth is equally illustrated by our need of help in every *act* of the divine life. Dear friends, have you ever tried what it is to perform any spiritual act apart from the divine power? What a dull, dead affair it becomes! What a mechanical thing prayer is without the Spirit of God. It is a parrot's noise, and nothing more; a weariness, a slavish drudgery. How sweet it is to pray when the Spirit gives us feeling, unction, access with boldness, pleading power, faith, expectancy, and full fellowship; but if the Spirit of God be absent from us in prayer our infirmities prevail against us, and our supplication loses all prevalence. Did you ever resolve to praise God, and come into the congregation where the sweetest psalms were being sent to heaven, but could you praise God till the Holy Spirit came like a divine wind and loosed the fragrance of the flowers of your soul? You know you could not; you used the sacred words of the sweet singers of Israel, but hosannas languished on your tongue and your devotion died. I know that it is dreadful work to be bound to preach when one is not conscious of the aid of the Spirit of God! It is like pouring water out of bottomless buckets, or feeding hungry souls out of empty baskets. A true sermon such as God will bless no man can preach of himself; he might as well try to sound the archangel's trumpet. We must have thee, O blessed Spirit, or we fail! O God, we must have thy power, or every action that we perform is but the movement of an automaton, and not the acceptable act of a living, spiritual man.

Have you never, dear friends, had to know that you cannot keep alive your own soul by your own blunderings and failings, when you have resolved to be very wise and correct? Did you ever get into a self-sufficient state and say, "Now, I shall never fall into that temptation again, for I am the burnt child that dreads the fire," and yet into that very sin you have fallen. Have you not said, "Well, I understand that business; there is no need to wait upon God for direction in so simple a matter, for I am well up in every particular relating to it, and I can manage the affair very well?" And have you not acted as foolishly in the whole concern as the Israelites did in the affair of the Gibeonites, when they were deceived by the old shoes and clouted, and the mouldy bread, and asked no counsel of the Lord? I tell you our strength, whenever we have any, is our greatest weakness, and our fancied wisdom is our real folly. When we are weak we are strong. When in a sense of entire dependence upon God, we dare not trust ourselves, we are both

wise and safe. Go, young man, even you who are a zealous Christian, go without your morning prayer into the house of business, and see what will befall you. Venture, my sister, down into your little family without having called upon God for guidance, and see what you will do. Go with a strong resolve that you will never be guilty of the weakness which dishonoured you a few days ago, and depend upon the strength of your own will, and the firmness of your own purpose, and see if you do not ere long discover to your shame how great your weakness is. Nay, try none of these experiments, but listen to the word which tells you "none can keep alive his own soul."

And now, should any think that he can keep his own soul alive, let me ask him to look at the enemies which surround him. A sheep in the midst of wolves is safe compared with the Christian in the midst of ungodly men. The world waylays us, the devil assaults us, behind every bush there lurks a foe. A spark in mid ocean is not more beset, a worm is not more defenceless. If the sight of foes without be not enough to make us confess our danger, look at the foes within. There is enough within thy soul, O Christian, though thou be one of the best of saints, to destroy thee in an hour unless the grace of God guard thee and keep thy passions in check, and prevent thy stubborn will from asserting its own rebellious determinations. Oh, what a powder magazine the human heart is, even at the best; if some of us have not been blown up it has been rather because Providence has kept away the sparks than because of there being any lack of powder within. Oh, may God keep us, for if he leaves us we want no devil to destroy us, we shall prove devils to ourselves; we shall need no tempters except the dire lusting after evil which now conceals itself so craftily within our own bosom.

Certainly, dear brethren, we may be quite sure that "none can keep alive his own soul" when we remember that in the gospel provision is made for keeping our soul alive. The Holy Spirit is given that he may continually quicken and preserve us, and Jesus Christ himself lives that we may live also. To what purpose would be all the splendid provisions and the special safeguards of the covenant of grace for the preservation of the spiritual life if that spiritual life could preserve itself? Why doth the Lord declare, "I the Lord do keep it," if it can keep itself? The granaries of Egypt, so full of corn, remind us that there is a famine in the land of Canaan: the treasures laid up in Christ Jesus assure us that we are in need of them. God's supplies are never superfluous, but are meant to meet real wants. Let us, then, all acknowledge that no man among us can keep alive his own soul.

II. This brings me, secondly and briefly, to notice that **THIS TRUTH BRINGS GLORY TO CHRIST**. "None can keep alive his own soul." Weakminded professors are prone to trust in man, but they have here an evident warning against such folly. How can they trust in a man who cannot keep alive his own soul? Shall I crouch at the feet of my fellow man and ask him to bear my confession and absolve me, when I know that he cannot keep alive his own soul? Shall I look up to him and call him "father in God," and expect to receive grace from the laying on of his hand, when I learn that he is a weak, sinful being like myself? He cannot keep alive his own soul, what can he do for me? If he lives before God he has to live upon the daily charity of the Most

High : what can he have to give to me ? Oh, look not to your fellow virgins for the oil of grace, for they have not enough for themselves and you ; and whatever name a man may dare to take, whether he be priest, father, or Pope, look not to him, but look to Jesus, in whom all fulness dwells.

The glory which redounds to Christ from our daily dependence is seen in his becoming to us our daily bread ; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, and we must feed upon these continually, or die. Eating is not an operation to be performed once only, but throughout life, and so we have to go to Jesus again and again and find sustenance in him as long as life lasts. Beloved, we honoured our Lord at first when he saved us, and through being daily dependent upon him we are led to honour him every day, and if we are right hearted we shall honour him more and more every day, as we more and more perceive our indebtedness to him. He is our daily bread whereon we feed continually, and the living water whereof we continually drink ; he is the light which everlastingly shines upon us, he is in fact daily to us our all in all ; and all this prevents our forgetting him. As at the first he saved us, so he saves us still ; and as at the first we prized him, we prize him still.

More than that, as our life is maintained, not only by him, but by our abiding in union with him, this leads us to abide in love towards him. Union is the source of communion and love. The wife remains a happy wife by loving fellowship with her husband. When the betrothed one is married to her beloved, the wedding day is not the end of it all ; the putting on of the ring is the beginning, not the end. And so, when we believe in Jesus, we are saved, but we must not idly feel " it is all done now." No, it is only begun. Now is the life of dependence, the life of faith, the life of obedience, the life of love, the life of union commenced, and it is to be continued for ever. This makes us love, honour, and adore our Lord Jesus, since we only live by being one with him.

We have also to remember that our life is daily supported by virtue of what the living Redeemer is still doing for us, as well as by receiving the fruit of his death, and of our spiritual union with him. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and therefore he is " able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." The life of the ascended Redeemer is intimately bound up with our life ;—" Because I live ye shall live also." How this honours Christ, for we are thus led to realize a living Saviour, and to love him as a living, breathing, acting person. It is a pity when men only think of a dead Saviour, or of a baby Saviour, carried in the Virgin's arms, as the church of Rome does ; it is our joy to have a living Christ, for while he lives we cannot die, and while he pleads we cannot be condemned. Thus we are led to remember him as a living Saviour, and to give him honour.

But oh, my brethren, what must be the fulness of Christ when all the grace which the saints have must come out of him, and not merely all they have had, but all they obtain every day comes from him. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, if there be anything heavenly, if there be anything divine, of his fulness have we received it, and grace for grace. What must be that power which protects and preserves myriads

of saints from temptation, and keeps them amid perils as many as the sands of the sea ! What must be that patience which watches over the frail children of God in all their weaknesses and wanderings, in all their sufferings, in all their infirmities ! What must be his grace which covers all their sin, and what his strength which supports them under all their trials ! What must the fountain head be, when the streams which flow to any one of us are so deep that we cannot fathom them, so broad that we cannot measure them ! Yet millions of happy spirits are each one receiving as much as any one of us may be, and still there is a fulness abiding in Christ the same as before, for it has pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. Not a saint lives a moment apart from him, for "none can keep alive his own soul." The cries of babes in grace and the shouts of strong men who divide the spoil, all come from the life which he lends and the strength which he gives. Between the gates of hell and the gates of heaven in all those pilgrims whose faces are towards the royal city all the life is Christ's life, and all the strength is Christ's strength, and he is in them, working in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure. Blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus, who thus supplies all his people. Does not this display the exceeding riches of his grace ?

III. Thirdly and practically, THIS SUBJECT SUGGESTS THE PATH OF WISDOM FOR OURSELVES. "None can keep alive his own soul," then, my dear brothers and sisters, what manner of persons ought we to be ?

Let me have your earnest thoughts on this point for a minute. Do not let any one among us look back to a certain day and say, "On that occasion I was regenerated and converted, and that is enough." I fear that some of you get into a very bad condition by saying, "If I can prove that I was converted on such a day that will do." This is altogether unjustifiable talk. Conversion is a turning into the right road ; the next thing is to walk in it. The daily going on in that road is as essential as the first starting if you would reach the desired end. To strike the first blow is not all the battle ; to him that overcometh the crown is promised. To start in the race is nothing, many have done that who have failed ; but to hold out till you reach the winning post is the great point of the matter. Perseverance is as necessary to a man's salvation as conversion. Do remember this, you not only want grace to begin with, but grace with which to abide in Christ Jesus.

Learn, also, that we should diligently use all those means whereby the Lord communicates fresh support to our life. A man does not say, "Well, I was born on such and such a day, that is enough for me." No, the good man needs his daily meals to maintain him in existence. Being alive, his next consideration is to keep alive, and therefore he does not neglect eating, nor any operation which is essential to life. So you, dear friends, must labour for the meat which endureth to life eternal, you must feed on the bread of heaven. Study the Scriptures daily—I hope you do not neglect that. Be much in private prayer, your life cannot be healthy if the mercy seat be neglected. Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is. Be eager to hear the word, and endeavour both to understand and practise it. Gather with God's people in their more spiritual meetings, when they join in prayer and

praise, for these are healthful means of sustaining the inner life. If you neglect these you cannot expect that grace will be strong within you, you may even question if there be any life at all. Still, remember that even if a man should eat and drink that would not keep him alive without the power of God, and many die with whom there is no lack either of air or food. You must, therefore, look beyond the outward means, to God himself to preserve your soul, and be it your daily prayer, "Oh Saviour, by whom I began to live, daily enable me to look to thee that I may draw continuous life from thy wounds, and live because thou livest." Take these things home and practise them.

Keep, dear friends, also clear of everything which has a tendency to destroy life. A sane man does not willingly take poison; if he knew it he would not touch the cup in which it had been contained. We are careful to avoid any adulteration in our food which might be injurious to life and health: we have our chemists busily at work to analyse liquids, lest haply inadvertently we should imbibe death in the water which we drink. Brethren, now let us be equally careful as to our souls. Keep your chemist at work analysing the things of this life. Let conscience and understanding fit up their laboratory and prove all things. Analyse the sermon of the eloquent preacher, lest you drink in novelties of doctrine and arrant falsehoods, because he happens to put them prettily before you. Analyse each book you read, lest you should become tainted with error, while you are interested with the style and manner, smartness and elegance of your author. Analyse the company you keep; test and try everything, lest haply you should be committing spiritual suicide, or carelessly squandering life away. Ask the Lord, the preserver of men, above all things, to keep you beneath the shadow of his wings, that you may not be afraid for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction which wasteth at noonday, because his truth has become your shield and buckler, and you are safe.

Watch your life carefully, but look to Jesus Christ from day to day for everything. Do not become self-satisfied, so as to say, "Now I am rich and increased in goods." If ever a child of God imitates the rich man in the parable, and says, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years," he is a fool as much as the rich man was. I have known some become very exalted in spiritual things, the conflict is almost over with them, temptation has no power, they are masters of the situation, and their condition is of the most elevated kind. Well, ballooning is very pleasant to those who like it, but I think he is safest who keeps on the ground: I fear that spiritual ballooning has been very mischievous to a great many, and has turned their heads altogether. Their high conceit is falsehood. After all, my friend, to tell you the truth very plainly, you are no better than other people, though you think you are, and in one point I am sure you miserably fail, and that is in humility. When we hear you declare what a fine fellow you are, we suspect that you wear borrowed plumes, and are not what you seem. A peacock is a beautiful bird, what can be more brilliant? But I am not enraptured with his voice, nor are you; and so there may be fine feathers about certain people, perhaps a little too fine, but while they are showing themselves off, we know that there is a weak point about them, and we pray that it may not cause dishonour to the cause of

Christ. It is not our part to be hunting about for the failings of our fellow Christians, yet boasting has a tendency to make us examine the boaster. The practical thing is to believe that when we are proud ourselves there is something wrong about us. Whenever we stand before the looking-glass and think what fine fellows we are, we had better go at once to the great Physician and beseech him to give us medicine for our vanity. Mr. Peacock, you are certainly very handsome, but you should hear yourself croak. Professor, there are fine points about you, but there are sorry ones too: be humble and so be wise. Brother, if you get an inch above the ground you are just that inch too high. If you have anything apart from Christ, if you can live five minutes on past experience, if you think that you can live on yesterday's grace you make a mistake. You put the manna by so very cannily, you stored it up in the cupboard with such self-content. Go to it to-morrow morning instead of joining the rest of your brethren in gathering the fresh manna which will fall all around the camp. Go to the cupboard where you stored up yesterday's manna! Ah, as soon as you open the door you close it again. Why did you shut that door so speedily? Well, we need not look inside the cupboard, the smell is enough; it has happened as Moses foretold it; it has bred worms and it stinks as he said it would. Cover it up as quickly as you can. Dig a deep hole and throw it all in and bury it, that is the only thing to do with such rottenness. Day by day go to Christ and you will get your manna sweet, but begin to live on past or present attainments and they will breed worms and stink as sure as you are a man. Do not try it, for "none can keep alive his own soul."

IV. Last of all, THIS SUBJECT INDICATES A WAY OF USEFULNESS for every one here present who is a child of God. I think the great business of the Christian's life is to serve God, and that he can do mainly by aiming at the conversion of sinners. It is a grand thing to be blessed of God to turn sinners from the error of their ways; but listen, brethren, there is equally good work to be done by helping struggling saints. The old Roman said he thought it as much an honour to preserve a Roman citizen as to slay an enemy of his country, and he was right. There is as much acceptance before God in the work of instrumentally preserving souls alive as in being made the means of making souls to live at the first; the upholding of believers is as needful an exercise for Christian workers as the ingathering of unbelievers. I want you to think of this. If there is a person nearly drowned, a man will leap into the water to bring him out, and he gets great credit for it, and deserves it; and so when a man saves a soul from death by earnest ministry, let him be glad and thank God. But if a man be starving, and ready to die, and you give him bread; or if he be not reduced to that point, but would have been so had you not interfered, you have done as good an action in preserving life as the other friend who snatched life from between the jaws of death. You must never think little of the work which instructs the ignorant Christian, which clears the stumbling-blocks out of the way of the perplexed believer, which comforts the feeble-minded and supports the weak. These needful works must be done, while soul-saving must not be left undone. Perhaps some of you never will be the means of the conversion of

many; then try to be the means of comfort to as many as you can. To be the means in the hand of the Holy Ghost of nurturing the life which God has given is a worthy service, and very acceptable with God. I would urge the members of this church to watch over one another. Be pastors to each other. Be very careful over the many young people that are come among us, and, if you see any backslide, in a gentle and affectionate manner endeavour to bring them back. Do you know any despondent ones? Lay yourselves out to comfort them. Do you see faults in any? Do not tell them of them hastily, but labour as God shall help you to teach them a better way. As the Lord often preserves you by the help of others, so in return seek to be in God's hands the means by which he shall keep your brethren from going astray, from sinking in despair, or from falling into error. I hold it out to you as a good and blessed work to do—will you try to accomplish it?

Now, if you say "Yes," and I think every Christian here says "Yes," then I am going to speak to you "concerning the collection, brethren." This is Hospital Sunday, and we must contribute our full share. Do you see any connection between this subject and the collection? I think I do. Here are these poor sick folk who will die unless they be carefully looked to, unless medicine and a physician's skill be provided for them. I know you are ready enough to look after sick souls; the point to which I have brought you is one which involves such readiness. Well, now, he who would look after a sick soul will be sure to care for a sick body. I hope you are not of the same class as the priest in the fable who was entreated by a beggar to give him a crown. "By no means," said the reverend father, "why should I give you a crown?" "Will you give me a shilling, holy father?" No, he would not give him a shilling, nor even a penny. "Then," said he, "holy father, will you of your charity give me a farthing?" No, he would not do anything of the sort. At last the beggar said, "Would not your reverence be kind enough to give me your blessing?" "Oh yes, my son, you shall have it at once; kneel down and receive it." But the man did not kneel down to receive it, for he reasoned that if it had been worth a farthing the holy father would not have given it to him, and so he went his way. Men have enough practical sense always to judge that if professed Christians do not care for their bodily wants, there cannot be much sincerity in their zeal for men's souls. If a man will give me spiritual bread in the form of a tract, but would not give me a piece of bread for my body, how can I think much of him? Let practical help to the poor go with the spiritual help which you render to them. If you would help to keep a brother's soul alive in the higher sense, be not backward to do it in the more ordinary way. You have an opportunity of proving your sincerity, and gratifying your charity, for the boxes will go round at once.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103 (Ver. III.), 407, 668.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A PRINCE AND A SAVIOUR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 25TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."—Acts v. 31.

THE same fact appears very differently to different people. Our Lord Jesus, having risen from the dead, was exalted with the right hand of God. To the Jewish priests and rulers this was a dreadful announcement. They could not endure to hear that Jesus, whom they slew and hanged on a tree, was yet alive. As the murderer is startled at the apparition of the ghost of the man he has slain, so were these rulers altogether dismayed at the idea that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had nailed to the cross, was risen from the grave; and they were astounded at the very thought that he whom they had put to death with all the shame that they could devise was with the full might and majesty of God exalted to the highest heavens. They were cut to the heart by the announcement as though a sword had cut them in twain, dividing their very bones. Full of indignation, they consulted how they could compass the death of those who had brought such evil tidings to their ears.

The fact had a very different effect upon the apostles. They were the friends of Jesus, and witnesses to his majesty; and when they were certified that, though they had seen him laid in the grave, he had risen and had ascended, and was now sitting at the right hand of God, even the Father, filled them with the greatest boldness and consolation. They might well speak in such a name, for it was assuredly divine. He who had conquered death, and opened the gates of heaven, must be able to take care of his own followers, and therefore with delight and courage they bearded his enemies in their dens. There was no need of trembling; who could harm them? They blushed not; there was nothing to blush at, for it was a triumphant cause. They feared not; there was nothing to fear, for the name high over all in heaven, and earth, and hell, would surely protect them from all peril. What was to the rulers a source of dismay was to the apostles a cause of courage.

No. 1,801.

Let me now enquire of you all how this fact of the exaltation of Christ impresses you? What think ye of Christ? As time would fail me to press this enquiry upon all classes in this assembly, I shall confine myself to those who have not yet found peace with God, and shall set the Ascended One before them, that in him they may find salvation. That is to be my subject: I want this morning to find out seekers, and by the help of God's Holy Spirit to encourage them, to direct them, so that if possible this may be the last morning in which they shall be called seekers, and the first day in which they shall be finders, and know how sweet Christ is to those who find him, and how inestimably precious his salvation is to those who receive it by faith in him.

I should be very glad this morning if we could get to business; for a great deal of hearing is not earnest hearing, but mere playing at hearing. Too many of you have ears to hear and yet do not truly hear. The word reaches the outward ear and goes no further, because you do not hear heartily and with earnest heed. Thousands of hearers are like spectators at a banquet who come into the gallery and look down upon the guests who are feasting below, but never taste a morsel themselves. For them there are no dainties for actual tasting: they look at the oxen and the fatlings, they see the enjoyment of the feasters, sometimes they feel their own mouths watering for the good things, and they almost envy those who are banqueting; but they do not seek a place at the loaded tables for themselves, they remain lookers-on. I pray this morning, and may God hear the desire of my soul, that you may all become partakers of the exceeding grace of God in Christ Jesus at this moment. May you who have fed feed again as you see the feast prepared in Christ, and may you who have never ventured to "taste and see that the Lord is good" approach the provisions of love this morning, and be fed with bread to the full. I want to see an end of mere wishes and desires, and to rejoice over the commencement of actual faith, and realized salvation. Come to business, and let us have no more talk or delay. I long to see you saved and saved at once, or perhaps you may never be saved at all.

Seeker, you know right well that if you are ever to be saved your salvation lies in Jesus Christ. "There is none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved," and you know that it is so. The point is to obtain the salvation which is in that name, and so to lay hold of Christ, that what is stored in him may become your own. May the Spirit of God bless you now, so that while we speak to our text you may be led by it to actual salvation in Christ Jesus.

I. First, then, let me invite you to NOTE HIS TITLES and learn their meaning. He is called "*a Prince and a Saviour*." You must know the Saviour, or you cannot be saved. It is important to you to understand the nature and character of him whom the Lord has set forth to be the only salvation of guilty men. The Lord Jesus is here described to you under two instructive names which comprehend within themselves the most of his offices and relationships; consider him now with deep attention.

He is called *a Prince* first. This tells you that he is receiving *honour* at this time as the reward of his sufferings on earth. While he was here below he was treated by his rebellious subjects as if he had been a felon.

What a mass of presents the Prince of Wales has brought home from his foreign travel; but when the Prince of Glory visited his dominions here below what did he take home with him except his wounds? "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The shame and the rejection are now ended, and in the glory yonder our Lord Jesus is manifestly a Prince, revered, obeyed, and honoured. Every angel in heaven delights to sing, "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ!" The highest powers and potentates of the spiritual kingdom bow before him, and hail him, joyfully hail him, as Lord over all, blessed for ever. His dominion extends over all creation; all things are put under his feet; he is the Prince of the kings of the earth, yea, he is Lord of all. Think of him, then, O seeking sinner, in this honourable estate. Let your mind conceive of Christ as worthy of all the homage and reverence that you can ever pay to him. Do not approach him without serious thought and careful reverence, for though he be condescending and gentle, yet is he a Prince to whom honour and obeisance must be paid.

The title of "prince" in our Lord's case signifies not only honour, but actual *power*. His is no nominal principedom—he has both glory and strength. Unto him is given the mediatorial kingdom, which includes all power in heaven and in earth, so that he is well styled "the blessed and only Potentate."

"His hands the wheels of nature guide
With an unerring skill,
And countless worlds, extended wide,
Obey his sovereign will."

Was it not said of old, "The government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." He is the Prince of the house of David, he openeth and no man shutteth; he shutteth and no man openeth. There is no bound to the power of Christ. If you seek his salvation think of him as Almighty, and remember that his power is now employed for the salvation of those who trust in him. He is exalted on high to be a Prince that he may give repentance and forgiveness of sins, so that the power which you see in him is all available for your salvation. Is not this encouraging? Does not this remove those fears which are suggested by your own feebleness? I desire that you may be led by the power of the Holy Spirit to conceive of our glorified Lord with the reverence which his honour deserves, and with the confidence which his power should command.

Remember, too, that a Prince signifies one who has *dominion*, and if Christ is to be yours to-day you must let him have dominion over you. "He must reign." He claims to be Master and Lord to those who ask salvation at his hands; and is not the claim a just one? Whom should we serve but the Lord who became a servant for our sakes? It must be so, or salvation is impossible; those who serve sin are not saved, nor can they be except by being brought to serve the Christ of God.

"This know, nor of the terms complain,
Where Jesus comes he comes to reign;
To reign, and with no partial sway;
Lusts must be slain that disobey."

You must accept Jesus to be a leader and a commander to you, or you cannot win the battle of life. You must yield him loving obedience, or he will not be married to your souls. His dominion is sweetly tempered by love; so that, as the prophet writes, "Thou shalt call me no more Baali," that is, "My Lord," with a hardness of rulership, but *Ishi*, "My Lord," because thou art my man, my husband; even so Jesus is our head and Lord, but his rule is that of supreme affection. There must be obedience to Jesus if there be faith in him, for true faith worketh by love. Will you render it?

Thus, then, Christ Jesus our Prince is crowned with honour and clothed with power, and he rightly claims and exercises dominion. I pray, dear hearer, that you may pay homage before him at once as your Prince.

The other title of the text is "*A Saviour*," and this name, it seems to me, should be very delightful to every seeking soul. Struggling into light, and prizing every ray of hope, it must be sweet to you to know that the Son of God is still a Saviour, though manifestly a Prince. Observe here *the perseverance of the Lord's love*. He was a Saviour here below; he is a Saviour now that he has reached his throne. We read of him while on earth, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost," and now that he has gone we still hear concerning him, "He is able, therefore, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." He has not paused in his blessed work of love. "He is the Saviour of the body." Saviour he was when he wore the garment without seam, and traversed the weary leagues of Palestine; Saviour he is now that he is girt about the paps with a golden girdle, and sits upon the throne; and Saviour he shall be in his second advent, for which we look, even the glorious appearing of our God and Saviour. Saviour he was when he wept over Jerusalem, Saviour he is still, though his eyes are like a flame of fire, and Saviour shall he be to his own redeemed when before his glance this earth shall flee away. Look up to him under that aspect.

O ye who seek him, remember that our exalted Lord is a Saviour in virtue of *the prevalence of the work which he achieved while here below*. When he dwelt here among men he was able to save, but his salvation was not complete, for he had not yet said, "It is finished." Now his redeeming work is done, and saving is a simple matter to him. Never did he so well deserve the name of Saviour as when he climbed to his throne. The ransom price has all been paid, and now, O Jesus, thou art Saviour indeed. The head of the serpent has been broken beneath thy heel: Saviour indeed thou art. The gates of the grave have been burst, the sepulchre is bereaven of its prey, and the resurrection is brought to light; thou art henceforth a Saviour to the uttermost, O Jesus. "By thine agony and bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion, by thy precious death and burial," thou hast finished salvation, and now our spirits shall rejoice in God our Saviour. I pray that you who seek him may have grace this morning to see him in the light of a Saviour, as pursuing still the work of saving souls, but yet pursuing it only to apply the atonement which his death completed. Look at him, O ye ends of the earth, as the Saviour, for such he is, and there is none else.

If he be a Saviour too, remember, this shows to trembling hearts *how*

approachable he is. You might be abashed at coming to a prince, but you may be encouraged in coming to a Saviour. O thou that wouldst be rid of thy sin, dost thou fear the Prince? Well mayest thou, for he can punish thee. But fear not, for the Saviour will forgive thee. Diseased with sin, dost thou think thyself unworthy of his princely presence? Yet he is Physician as well as Prince: therefore come thou where the glance of his eye, or the touch of his hand, will make thee perfectly whole. I wish I knew how to put my Lord before you in the best of words, and describe him so sweetly that you would all fall in love with him: but, indeed, I believe him to be so beautiful that if I can only convey to you the faintest idea of him you must be enamoured of him, if you love that which is good and fair. While I am describing him I feel I do but put a mist about him; but, then, he is the sun, and he can break through my cloudy language, and cause your hearts to see him in all his glory.

"A Prince and a Saviour." Suppose I put the words together and say, a Prince-saviour: one who is lordly and kingly in the salvation which he brings, and deals out no stinted grace, but makes us to receive of his fulness grace for grace. Turn the titles the other way, and reverse the order, and truly he is a Saviour-prince whose glory it is to save, whose kingdom and power and dominion are all turned in full force to achieve the work of rescuing his people from destruction. "A Prince and a Saviour." This is the Christ to whom you must come, O ye who would be delivered from your sins. Look to him and live.

II. APPROACH HIM, THEN, UNDER THESE TWO CHARACTERS. I would come to very close quarters with you who are seeking the Lord, while I urge you to approach Jesus Christ as a *Prince*. "And how shall we do that?" say you. I answer, come to him at once, with the *sorrowful confession* of your past rebellion. You have lived I do not know how many years, you unconverted ones, without paying due homage to Jesus; you have known about him, but you have not obeyed him. Up to this moment you have resisted his love, and said, "Let us break his bands asunder and cast his cords from us." Confess this, and be ashamed, for it is a great disgrace not to be swayed by such love as that of Christ; it is a great sin not to be in love with such an inimitable character as that which shines in the person of the Son of God; it shows great moral hardness of heart, and bluntness of perception, and prejudice of soul, and ignorance of mind not to be at once the willing subject of Christ. These many years you have said, "I will not have this man to reign over me." Oh, may the gentle Spirit cause you now to see the folly and the sin of this conduct, and may you confess it with tearful eyes while you obey the bidding of the old Psalm, and "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry."

When you have confessed the past before this Prince, then I charge you *accept his great purpose, and submit to his rule*. He is a Prince, therefore yield yourself to be his subject. Do you know what the object of his rule is? It is to make you love God, and to be like God. You are created, and therefore launched upon the sea of existence; you cannot help this fact or alter it; your existence has been given you and you cannot lose it. How can this creation of yours be an eternal blessing, and the danger be removed of its becoming a never-ending

curse? The answer is simple; if you are right with your Creator you are right with everything; if you are reconciled to him you will be happy in time and in eternity. But you cannot be right with your Creator until past guilt is forgiven and sin is given up, and the love of wrongdoing, the love of everything that is contrary to his pure and holy mind is destroyed in you. Now, Jesus comes in order that he may kill in you everything that is contrary to the mind of God; he comes to make you holy, ay, to make you perfect. Will you yield yourself to his gentle purpose? Are you ready to obey his precepts by means of which his Spirit will sanctify you wholly—spirit, soul, and body? He is able to save from sin; his name is Jesus, “for he shall save his people from their sins.” Do you really wish to be saved from sin? Jesus once asked a sick man, “Wilt thou be made whole?” It is the question which he asks of you to-day, dear friend. You would be glad to be saved from going to hell; ay, that is not it; do you desire to be saved from that which created hell, from that which is the fuel of the unquenchable fire and the tooth of the undying worm—namely, the love of iniquity, the love of sin? Christ can save from sin as a Saviour, and lead you into the kingdom of righteousness, of which he is the Prince. Are you willing that he should do so?

If it be taken for granted that you have approached the Lord Jesus in this way, I would next say, as he is a Prince, *surrender everything to him*. Christ claims of you that if you are saved, since it is through his redemption, you should henceforth be his. If he has redeemed you then you belong to him; henceforth you are not your own, you are bought with a price. It is an inevitable consequence of being redeemed from death and hell by Jesus' blood that you should be Christ's for ever. Oh, can you lift your eye to heaven and say, “If he will have me, I will cheerfully be his”? Can you make over now, this morning, by the help of God's Spirit, your body and your soul as a living sacrifice? Can you give to him now all that you owe, and all that you have? Could you stand at the foot of the cross and say—

“And if I might make some reverse,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give him all”?

He asks it of you: will you, do it, O seeking soul, will you do it? For if that be done surely then Christ is to you a Prince and a Saviour?

And if this be accomplished, and he be Lord, then *pay your loving, loyal homage to your Prince*. Behold him in his glory, where all the angels cast their crowns before him, while the elders adore him with vials full of sweet odours. If Christ is to be your Saviour he must be your prince, and you must have a loyal attachment to him, deep and true. Is this a hard thing to ask of you? Methinks it is the joy of my life to be the subject and the servant of King Jesus. The name of the Queen stirs the British soldier's heart, and oftentimes in the hour of battle he has thought of his sovereign and his country, and has been willing to lay down his life; but the love of Jesus is a more intense passion by far, and the loyalty of a good soldier to Jesus Christ is a stronger force than any loyalty to earthly princes. You must have

this. Do you see how right it is that you should have it? Towards such an one as Jesus we are proud to cherish a love which many waters cannot quench, a love stronger than death. Approach him, then, with loving hearts, or at least bring your hearts, and ask to have them made loving.

You must also approach the Lord Jesus as *Saviour*. Do not proudly murmur at this. I have known some who have been willing to take Christ for their example, and as their teacher; and so far they have owned him as a Prince, but they cannot brook it that they should confess their need of a Saviour: but you must have Jesus as a Saviour as well as a Prince, or you will be lost for ever. I do now affectionately urge the sinner who is seeking mercy to come to Christ Jesus, *confessing that he needs a Saviour*. Look at your sin, and consider your past life with all its transgressions. Are you not ashamed of it? Are you not afraid to stand before that judgment-seat where you must give an account for every idle word that you have spoken? Does not conscience fill you with trembling? Well, come and tell the Saviour; tell him all. Pour out your heart before him; acknowledge that you are undone, and condemned, unless he can in his pity obtain a pardon for you. Are you actually doing so now? Come to business, as I have said before; make the confession now from your heart while we are yet speaking.

That done, since Christ is a Saviour, *believe that he is able to save you*. Seeing he died the bitter death of the cross, suffering from divine justice in a most terrible manner upon Calvary, there must be in those five wounds power enough to be the death of every sin. O crimson blood, thou must have merit enough in thee to wash out crimson sin. It must be so. He who died upon the cross is God as well as perfect man, and a sacrifice offered by him must have infinite power and efficacy to remove sin. Believe thou this also, and when thou hast believed it then understand that thou must *submit thyself entirely to his processes of salvation*. He is able to save thee, but he has a way of his own, and he will not save thee in thy way but in his way; and his way of saving thee is to make thee feel the smart and bitterness of sin, to make thee hate that sin and loathe it, and so to turn thee from it for ever. Thus he saves thee: art thou willing to have it so? Canst thou say "Farewell" this morning to the sins thou hast so long loved? Is there any attraction to thee yet in the harlots and the riotous livers with whom thou hast spent thy Father's substance? Hast thou still a lingering love to the far country, or canst thou bid its citizens a long farewell? Do the swine attract thee? Hast thou a hankering after the husks which they do eat, so that thou canst refuse to go to Christ when he would take thee away from these filthy pleasures and degrading delights? Canst thou say, "I cannot linger longer here; it is Sodom, and the fire will soon descend from heaven; I must flee for my life, and look not behind me; I must and will do so, for Jesus takes me by the hand and leads me on"? If thou hast sincerely done this and thou art willing to have a divorce from thy sins, *mensa et thoro*, from table and bed, and hearth, and in all ways, so that sin and thee shall no more be on loving terms, then, I say, if thou art willing for this, all thou hast now to do is to *trust thy Saviour*. Lean all thy weight on him; repose thy whole self on him. Thou seest thy need of

him, thou seest his power to save thee, and thou knowest what is meant by being saved, namely, delivered from the power of sin: wilt thou now trust him to make thee pure? If thou dost, thou hast come to him as a Prince and a Saviour, and he has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," and he will not, cannot cast thee out.

This approach to the Lord Jesus should be made at this moment, where you now are. There is no need to go elsewhere, or tarry for an hour. While yet you are here God's Holy Spirit can enable you to come to Christ as your Prince and your Saviour.

I am putting the truth very plainly. I have scarcely used one figure of speech or a single ornament of language, but I have tried to tell you the way of salvation very plainly, and having told you it I can do no more but earnestly ask you, will you have this Prince and Saviour or not? May the Spirit of God persuade you to give the right reply.

III. In the third place, NOTE THE GIFTS OF THE LORD JESUS. He is "exalted with God's right hand to give repentance and forgiveness of sins." Now if, dear hearer, thou art distressed this morning beneath the burden of sin, I pray thee to catch at this blessed sentence, for there is honey here which shall take away the bitterness of thy soul. I think I heard thee say, "Fain would I have Christ as Prince and Saviour: I am willing enough; but this hard heart, this rebellious will, what can I do with them?" Listen: "He is exalted to give *repentance*." This does not mean, as some have said, to give space for repentance. We must not add words to Scripture. Nor does it mean to make repentance acceptable. Look at the text, and no trace of such a meaning is there. But "to give repentance," and repentance itself is intended, which is as much the gift of the ascended Saviour as the forgiveness which follows upon it. What is repentance? If we keep to its literal meaning it is a change of mind, but then it is a very wonderful change of mind. He can give thee to change thy mind about all the past, so that the things which pleased thee shall grieve thee, that which charmed thee shall disgust thee, that which thou dost love thou shalt hate, and that which thou dost desire thou shalt abhor. This is his gift to his chosen: "I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh; a new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." What a marvellous thing this change of mind as to the past is. He can also change thy mind as to the present and the future, so that instead of looking for present pleasure thou wilt find thy delight in future glory realized by faith. Dost thou understand me? It shall be pleasure enough to thee to think of the pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. Jesus can save thee from living like the beast which looks not an hour ahead, but is content with the pasturage around it, and will even walk into the slaughter-house to be slain, so little does it know what is reserved for it. Jesus can save thee from being so brutish, and make thee look into the eternal future with the eye of a wise man. He can give thee a good hope, and inspire thee with a good object worthy of the eternity which lies before thee. Christ can give such a change of mind as shall make the whole world seem new, and thyself most changed of all.

Repentance includes a most needful sense of sin, and the Saviour can give thee this by his Spirit. He can fill thy soul with the barbed

arrows of conviction till thy heart bleeds with inward grief on account of sin, or he can work more gently and make thee repent by melting thee beneath the smiles of love. He can make thee sing—

“Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolved by thy goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”

He can work in thee desires after holiness and hatred of every false way; he can take the guile out of thy soul as well as the guilt out of thy life; he can give thee to be true and upright before him, and cleansed in the inward parts.

Everything that is included in “repentance” Jesus Christ is exalted to give. Now, if no one obtains repentance, then Christ is exalted in vain; but somebody must have it, for Christ is not exalted in vain; why then shouldst not thou have it? Thou needest it: thy heart seems hard as granite and cold as a block of ice. Well, if thou needest it, why shouldst thou not have it? To whom does a man give his alms but to the needy? Do not the wise distribute their gifts to those who want them? If thou wantest them come and freely take of them. Repentance will not spring out of thy unrenewed heart, but the Prince and Saviour can create it in thee; come thou to him for it.

“True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings you nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”

Here I preach Christ not merely to penitent sinners, but to impenitent sinners. O rock, be smitten with this rod! The cross can fetch the waters of repentance out of stony hearts! O hard heart be melted with this sacred fire! The fire of Jesus’ love can dissolve the northern iron and steel of obdurate impenitence. He is exalted on high to give repentance, therefore, O sinners, look to him for repentance.

It is added as his second gift, “to give *forgiveness* ;” and the forgiveness which Jesus gives is very blessed. I pray thee, seeking soul, catch at each word I now say on this point. He can pass an act of amnesty and oblivion for all thy sin. If he forgive thee, all thy transgressions shall be as though they had never been. He will make clean work of it, blotting out every record of thy sin, so that in God’s book there shall be no grieving memory of thy having been a sinner at all. So powerful is the atoning blood that all manner of sin and transgression shall be forgiven unto men for its sake. Sins against a holy God, sins against Christ’s love and blood, sins against conscience, sins against the law, sins against the gospel, sins which have lain in your bones from your youth up, sins of your middle age, sins of your old age, aggravated sins, black sins, damnable sins, all are gone when he saith, “I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and as a thick cloud thy transgressions.” Jesus has gone to heaven on purpose to give this complete forgiveness.

Now mark, when full forgiveness comes it brings with it the eternal removal of the penalty. The forgiven man cannot be punished; for

him there is no hell, no worm that dieth not, nor fire that never can be quenched. God cannot forgive and then punish. If he remove thy transgressions from thee as far as the east is from the west, then who is he that shall lay anything to thy charge? Who is he that can condemn? And who is he that can punish thee?

With the pardon of sin there shall come also a restoration of every privilege. All that Adam had in the garden you shall have to be yours—not all of it to enjoy just now, but all and more than all shall really be restored to you, for the man who wears the righteousness of Christ and is accepted in the Beloved may not have a paradise on earth, but he has a paradise above; for him there may be no golden apples of Eden, but there shall be the fruit of the tree of life, of which he shall eat for ever and ever.

“What Adam had, and forfeited for all,
Christ hath who cannot fail nor fall.”

He that believeth on Christ Jesus shall dwell in bliss and be satisfied with the goodness of the Lord.

And mark thee once again, thou shalt, when forgiven, have *quiet in thy soul*, for when thou art pardoned all the hurly-burly of thy spirit shall turn into a deep calm; thou shalt have the “peace of God which passeth all understanding” to “keep thy heart and mind by Christ Jesus.” “Oh,” saith one, “I would give my eyes for it.” You shall have it without giving your eyes. Give your heart: nay, and not even give your heart as a price for it, but take the blessing freely, for freely it is given. Jesus is exalted on high that he may grant free pardons to great offenders. I come back to that statement: if Jesus is exalted on purpose to give pardon, then if he does not give forgiveness to some one he is exalted in vain. He must therefore give it to some: why should he not bestow it upon you?

The text says, “to give repentance to Israel.” Who and what was Israel? The people of Israel in our Lord’s time were surely the very worst of sinners, for it was by them that the Lord was nailed to the cross. It was the Jews who cried “Crucify him, crucify him.” It means, then, that Jesus is exalted to give repentance and pardon to the chief of sinners, and if I be one, if instead of blaming Jews or the Romans I blame myself, if I take the death of Christ on my own shoulders and say,

“’Twas you my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.”

Then is he exalted to give me repentance and remission for my great sins.

Do I need to ask you, will you have these two gifts? Ah, friends, it shows how deep is the depravity of the human heart that we should have need to press our Master’s mercies on you. If sin were not a madness, it would only need the preacher to come and tell out this blessed gospel, and you would begin to sing, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth as a Prince and a

Saviour in heaven." Instead, however, of offering my Lord a joyful reception, some of you will count it a weariness to be entreated and pleaded with. I feel in my own soul that though my Master enables me to put these things before you, you will not receive them unless his love constrains you. We can bring the horse to the water, but we cannot make it drink; and we can bring Christ before you, but we cannot make you accept him. I pray that there may be some soft relentings, some gentle meltings of your spirit this very morning, for "unto you is the word of this salvation sent."

My dear hearer, I may never have addressed you before; happy shall I be if at the very first assault I win your soul for my Master. Or perhaps I have spoken with you many, many times, and my voice is getting rather stale and flat to you. Well, I am sorry if I mar the message, but still it is so good that, though I stammered it, you ought still to catch at it and say, "Yes, if he is exalted to give repentance and pardon, here is my bosom, Lord, pour them both into my soul at this good hour."

IV. As I said to you about the titles, approach the Lord Jesus as such, so now I say about his gifts—ASK HIM FOR THEM. Ask now, at this moment. Again I say, I want you to come to business, and be doing as well as listening; while I am speaking may the Holy Ghost incline your hearts to practical obedience. At this moment ask the Lord Jesus *humbly* for repentance and pardon. You do not deserve these gifts; if he leaves you to perish he will be just. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. You have no claim to his love, and must not set up any. Your heart is hard, and he can leave you in your unbelief: you are guilty, and he can justly leave you to bear your punishment. Ask *humbly*, therefore, not daring to claim anything, but appealing to his sovereign grace. Sing—

"O save a guilty sinner, Lord,
Whose hope still hovering round thy word;
Would light on some sweet promise there,
Some sure support against despair."

Ask importunately. Do not come to mercy's gate this morning with a cold heart and a trifling spirit. Come with this resolve, "I will not leave the cross till my sins have left me. I will plead for the grace of God until I obtain it. With importunity will I wrestle saying—

'Lord, I cannot let thee go
Till a blessing thou bestow.'

The angel is near this morning; seize him; grasp him; and if he seem to fling thee off yet hold him still, and say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me, and bless me now?" You will get the blessing if you can pray like that: with deep humility because you are unworthy, but with violent importunity because you are in such fearful peril, and you cannot endure to be lost.

But I ask you to pray *believingly*, and this is indeed the pith of the matter. Ask for remission and repentance this morning, believing that Christ can give it, and believing that he is as willing as he is able. If you can look up and see those dear eyes which wept over sinners;

if you can see those wounds, still open for sinners, like so many gates of heaven, you will perceive that Jesus still calls to you, and bids you trust him. Do not think him unwilling to forgive. That would be too cruel a suspicion after he has died. Trust him wholly, only, sincerely, solely. Have done with those works, and prayers, and tears which you have been wont to rely upon. All that you ever did to save yourself must be undone. Nature's spinning must all be unravelled, her figleaves will wither; sin's nakedness requires a better covering. Your only hope lies in him who is Prince and Saviour. Cry at once to him—

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;
Thou art my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all.”

And—and this is the last word—*ask now*. Do not put me off this morning. I am in earnest if you are not. But oh, it is *your* soul, not mine, that is now at stake. I pray thee be in earnest, O man, and be so now. Perhaps thou wilt never hear another pleading; it may be this is the last Sabbath thou wilt spend on earth; and where wilt thou be if thou reject the Saviour? Where the Sabbath bell shall never ring out its happy summons, where the silver voice of mercy shall never again salute thee. There is another world; you will not die like a dog; there is a judgment to come, and you will have to stand before your Maker to give an account of all your life. There is an everlasting punishment as surely as there is an eternal reward. Now I ask thee, and I charge thee, to go not further till thou hast answered this question—is it worth while to lose thy soul whatever thou canst gain by it? The Romans when they meant to bring things to an issue with an Oriental tyrant, sent their ambassador, and the ambassador was to bring his answer back—yes or no, war or peace. What think you the messenger did? When he saw the king he stooped down, and with his wand he drew a ring upon the ground round the monarch; and then said, “Step outside that ring, and it means war with Rome; before you leave that circle you must accept our terms of peace, or know that Rome will use her utmost force to fight with you.” I draw a ring round you while you are sitting in that pew, or standing in that aisle, and I demand an answer. Sinner, wilt thou now be saved or not? To-day is the accepted time, to-day is the day of salvation. O Holy Spirit, lead the sinner now to ask and he shall receive, to believe, and he shall be saved. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts v. 17—42.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—304, 569, 332.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOOD CHEER FOR OUTCASTS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 15TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.”—Psalm cxlvii. 2.

DOES not this show us the great gentleness and infinite mercy of God? And as we know most of God in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, should it not charm us to remember that when he came on earth he did not visit kings and princes, but he came unto the humble and simple folk. He did not seek out Pharisees, wrapped up in their own supposed righteousness, but he sought out the guilty, for he said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.” The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. It would have seemed natural that our Lord Jesus, when he came here, should first of all, have addressed himself to the most respectable people he could find, and should have sent his message to the rabbis of Jerusalem, to the senators at Rome, to the philosophers of Greece; instead of which the common people heard him gladly, and he rejoiced in spirit while he said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

I think you may judge of a man's character by the persons whose affection he seeks. If you find a man seeking only the affection of those who are great, depend upon it he is ambitious and self-seeking; but when you observe that a man seeks the affection of those who can do nothing for him, but for whom he must do everything, you know that he is not seeking himself, but that pure benevolence sways his heart. When I read in the text that the Lord gathers together the outcasts of Israel, and when I see that the text is truly applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ, because this is just what he did, I see another illustration of the gentleness of his heart, who said, “Take my yoke upon you, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Be glad to-night, dear friends, that we gather around such a Saviour as this, from whom all pride and self-seeking are absent, and who, coming
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down among us in gentleness and meekness, comes to gather those whom no man cares for—those who are judged to be worthless and irreclaimable. He comes to gather together the outcasts of Israel.

Applying this text to our Lord Jesus Christ we not only see his gentleness, but we also clearly see an illustration of his love to men, as men. If you seek only after rich men the suspicion arises, and it is more than a suspicion, that you rather seek their wealth than them. If you aim only at the benefit of wise men, it is probably true that it is their wisdom which attracts you, and not their manhood: but the Lord Jesus Christ did not love men because of any advantageous circumstances, or any commendable incidents of their condition: his love was to manhood. He loved his own chosen people as men, not as this or that among men. He has no respect for rank, nor care for wealth. A man is a man with Christ whether the "guinea-stamp" be there or no: he died not for titles and dignities, but for men. "Not yours, but *you*," our Lord Jesus could truly say. Where Jesus Christ sees a man, though he be an outcast, an outlaw, one condemned by the law of his own country, he sees a human being there—a creature capable of awful sin and terrible misery, but yet, renewed by grace, capable of bringing wondrous glory to the Most High. Our Lord Jesus Christ, by gathering together the outcasts, proves to demonstration that it is not the things which surround men, but the men themselves that he cares for. He considers not so much *where* a man is, but *what* he is; not what he has learned, or what he is thought of, or what he has done; but what he is. The man is the jewel, the immortal soul is the pearl of great price, which Jesus seeks as a merchantman seeks goodly pearls.

Another thing is also clear. If Jesus gathers together the outcasts of Israel, it proves his power over the hearts of men. There is a certain class of men who follow that which is morally good because the Lord has given them a noble disposition. Thank God, he has in mercy been pleased to give some men a desire after that which is beautiful and true. They, too, are merchantmen seeking goodly pearls, and it is not difficult, when the heart is brought into such a desirable state, for the excellence and beauty of Jesus Christ to attract it. But here is the tug of war: there are men still left in the guilt and filthiness of human nature who have no desire after that which is good, but whose entire longings are after evil, only evil, and that continually. These have no more eye to anything that is high and noble than the swine hath for the stars. The minister of Christ may appeal to them, but he will appeal in vain; and providence may warn them by the deaths of others, and by personal sickness, but they are not to be separated from the earth to which they are glued. Yet our Lord Jesus can gather together even these, the outcasts of Israel. Such is his power that he does not stay till he sees good desires in men, but he imparts those desires to those who have them not. Such are the charms of his cross that blind eyes are made to see by its beauty; such is the music of his voice that deaf ears are opened by its music; such is the majesty of his life that the dead hear his voice, and they that hear are made to live. No groundwork of goodness is asked or expected from any man that Christ may come and act upon it; but he takes man in his ruin, and in the extremity of his depravity, and begins with him there and then. When the good

Samaritan came to the wounded man, he did not wait for him to make the first advance, or come a little towards him, but he came unto him where he was, and poured into his wounds the oil and the wine: so the Lord comes where human nature is, and, bad as its condition is, he stoops to it, and he gathers together the outcasts of Israel. Oh, it is a wonderful thing this, that there should be attractions about the Lord Jesus Christ which can draw to him those whom nothing else that is good can possibly stir! You may preach virtue to the sinner; but he does not practically yield to its charms; you may preach to the drunkard, to the unchaste, to the immoral, the beauties and excellences of honesty and of all the virtues and the graces, but little good will come of it; the result is infinitesimal. You may charm very wisely upon those subjects, but these deaf adders do not care for charming. We have heard of a divine who said that he had preached honesty till he had not an honest person left in the parish, and preached of virtue till he did not know where Diogenes with his lantern could find it. Nothing worth having comes of preaching when Christ is not its theme. You may preach the law, and men will be frightened by it, but they will forget their fears; yet if Jesus Christ be preached he draws all men unto him. The most wicked will listen to the news of him who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. The most obdurate have been known to weep when they have heard the story of his grief and of his love, the proudest have found themselves suddenly humbled at his feet, whereof some of us are witnesses, for we marvelled to find the hardness and loftiness of our hearts suddenly removed by a sense of his goodness. I do not believe that we preachers have half enough, or a tenth enough, faith in Jesus Christ. If we could preach Jesus Christ to a company of convicted felons should we be wrong in hoping to see the larger part of them converted on the spot? If we had but faith enough to preach to them as we should, aiming directly, distinctly, and believingly at their souls, might we not look for great results? We go so timidly, so doubtingly to work. We pray that God would save *some* out of our congregations, and that he would be pleased to bless the word here and there: but, such a splendid gospel as we have to preach should not be preached so, nor should we so pray about it. When Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness it was not with this prayer—"Lord, grant that one or two of those who are bitten of the serpent may look and live;" but Moses came out boldly with his serpent high upon the pole; he believed that thousands would look: they did look, and they lived. May we after the same manner proclaim Jesus who "gathereth together the outcasts of Israel."

Now, with this introduction, I would speak upon the text a little more particularly, and we shall observe with brevity, first, *to whom the text applies*,—"He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." Secondly, we shall consider *in what sense he may be said to gather them*; and then, thirdly, *what lesson this teaches us*.

I. First, then, TO WHOM MAY THIS TEXT APPLY—"He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel"? It refers to several classes in different ways.

First, it is a fact that our Lord Jesus did gather together some of the

very *poorest and most despised among men*, who might under some respects be regarded as outcasts ; and it is certain that, to this day, the gospel comes in the largest measure of power to the poor of this world. Often, too, it comes with amazing power to those who are despised by others, or are regarded as being of inferior degree. You know that at this time it is boastfully said by the enemies of the gospel, that the culture, the brain, the intellect, the education of England is all on the side of scepticism. I am not sure about it. When people say that they possess a deal of brain, I am not certain that their claim is correct, unless it be that as sheep have a good deal of brain, and yet are not the wisest animals in the world, so these gentlemen also are no wiser than they should be. As to those gentlemen who so evidently claim to be the cultured people, who monopolize all the sweetness and the light, I am not clear that they have all the modesty. It does seem to me that if they talked in a lower key it would be as well ; and if they thought a little less of their own culture, and allowed a little more to other people, we might have more faith in this wonderful "culture" of theirs. Some of us have failed to see the deep thought and the profound learning we were told to look for in the books of the sceptical cultured mind, and therefore we are the less patient when we hear the perpetual bragging of our foes. Still, let it stand so. We will not quarrel with it. Suppose it to be so—that none but foolish people embrace the old-fashioned faith—the Puritanism, which they say is nearly dead—the old evangelism which they ridicule as being exploded : be it so, that we are an inferior order of people, with very little brain, and all that. Well, we are not out of heart on that account, because we find that it so happened in our Saviour's day, and has happened all days since, that the wisdom of the world has been at enmity with God ; and it has also turned out that the foolishness of God has been wiser than men, and God has mastered human wisdom by the foolishness of preaching. By that gospel which wise men laughed at as being folly God has brought carnal wisdom to naught. The Lord Jesus Christ looks with love on those whom others look down upon with scorn.

"He takes the fool, and makes him know
The wonders of his dying love,
To lay aspiring wisdom low,
And all our pride reprove."

I am thankful when I meet with poor saints, and see what a grip humble men and women get of the promises of God. Labouring men, humble shepherds, and the like, have often been more distinguished for deep insight into the mysteries of grace than learned doctors of divinity. Where there has been little in the cupboard, and the provision on the table has been but slender, there has been more enjoyment of the favour of God than amongst the great ones of the earth. They may regard those who still stand by the old-fashioned truth as being outcasts from the commonwealth of letters, and not worthy to be named amongst the cultured intellects of the age, but if the Lord will but gather us continually to his bosom and refresh us with himself, we shall be well content. The text should be a source of joy to us if any of us happen to be extremely poor—so poor that even Christian men are so ungenerous

as to give us the cold shoulder, or if we happen to be the despised ones of our family. Here and there, sad to say it, there will be in families a better one than the rest, less thought of than the others—a Joseph whom his brothers hate, because he loves his God. Well, you may become as a stranger to your mother's children, and you may have no one to give you a good word, yet may you put this verse under your tongue as a sweet morsel—"He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." Those who are lowest in the esteem of men are still remembered by the Lord.

The text may be applied very well to those *who have made themselves outcasts by their wickedness and are deservedly cast out of society*. May God grant that none of us may be or may have been amongst that number; but if I should be addressing any such at this time, I have a word for them. If there should be some such here to-night who do not often attend places of worship, but have dropped in from curiosity I may suppose your case to be that of one who has broken a mother's heart and brought a father's grey hairs to the grave with grief. You have lived such a life that your own brothers could scarcely be expected to acknowledge you. You have sinned, and sinned terribly. Man or woman—for woman also becomes an outcast, she is too severely treated, as a general rule, and oftener becomes an outcast than the man who deserves it more—if I address such, it is a great joy to me to know that our Lord Jesus Christ can save the most wicked of the wicked, the most fallen of the fallen, the most depraved of the depraved. If you have sunk so low that there is not much to choose between you and a devil, and some men and women do get as low as that, yet Jesus Christ can lift you up. If your life-story is such that it would be a pity it should ever be told, and most grievous that it should ever have been enacted, yet Jesus can wash all the stains of your life away, and save you, even you. Only one such may be present here to-night, but I make no apology for concentrating my whole thoughts upon one single person. I leave the ninety and nine to go after the one lost sheep, that in the one lost one may be revealed the richness and freeness of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Come, then, outcast, come to your Redeemer and find pardon. "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as snow: though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Jesus is able to wash away every transgression from those who are steeped in guilt. Countless iniquities dissolve and disappear before the presence of his mighty love, for he, even Jesus, gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. Is there no helper on earth? Yet is there one in heaven. Is there no friend below? Yet is there one above. Is there nothing that can now save you? Do you meditate suicide? Stay, stay your hand, for Jesus is "able to save to the uttermost"—*to the uttermost*—"them that come unto God by him." Let the prayer go up, "God be merciful to me a sinner"; and go thy way with hope in thy soul, for "he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel."

A third class of persons consists of *those who judge themselves to be outcasts*, though as to outward actions they certainly do not deserve the character. Many who have written about John Bunyan have been surprised at the description which he gives of his own life, for it does not appear that, with the sole exception of the use of blasphemous language,

John Bunyan was one of the very worst of mankind; but he thought himself to be so. Now it often happens—I do not say always, but I think it is generally so—that when the Spirit of God comes with power to the conscience and awakens it, the man judges himself to be the very chief of sinners. For see, it may be that you have never gone into actual vice; you have never been a blasphemer or dishonest, you have, on the contrary, from the instructions of your childhood, been led into the path of right; and yet when you are awakened you may feel yourself to be vilest of the vile. Everything that is lovely and of good report has been found in you, you do not know the time in which you would not have been shocked to hear a blasphemous word, and yet when the Holy Spirit arouses you, you will plead guilty among the very worst. I know that, in my own case, I had a horror of ungodliness, and yet when the Spirit of God came to me I felt myself to be far worse than the swearer or the drunkard, for this reason—that I knew that many who indulged in those open sins did so ignorantly, did so from the imitation of those in whose society they had been brought up; but as for me, with a godly parentage, with a mother's prayers and tears, with light and knowledge, understanding the letter of the gospel, having read the Bible from my youth up, I felt that my sins were blacker than those of others, because I had sinned against light and knowledge. And you must have felt the same, I am persuaded; perhaps you are even now feeling it. You recollect that night when you stifled conviction, when conscience had an earnest battle with you, and it seemed that you must yield to God and to his Christ; but you deliberately did violence to the inward principle, and resolved to go on in sin. Do you remember that? If you do, it will sting you as doth a serpent now that you are under conviction of sin, and you will feel yourself to be the very chief of sinners on account of it, though no public sin may ever have stained your life. Well, I should not wonder, if such be your condition, that you also judge that there is no salvation for you—that God might save your mother, your brother, or your friend, but not you. You believe the blood of Jesus to be very precious, but you think it never will be applied to you. You heard the other day of the conversion of a friend, and you felt glad, but at the same time you thought, "Grace will never come to me." When the preacher has exhorted his hearers to believe in Jesus Christ you have said, "Ah, but I—I cannot. I am in a condition in which that gospel does not avail me." You think yourself an outcast. You feel that you deserve to be. You are not content to be so, but, at the same time, you could not blame the Lord if he left you to perish. You feel that your transgressions have been so great that if he should leave you out of his gracious plans, and grace should come to others and not to you, you could only bow your head in bitterest sorrow, and say, "Thou art just, O God." Now, listen, thou who hast condemned thyself. The Lord absolves thee. Thou who hast shut thyself out as an outcast, thou shalt be gathered; for whereas they call thee an outcast, whom no man seeketh after, thou shalt be called Hephzibah, for the Lord's delight is in thee. Only believe thou in Jesus Christ, and cast thyself upon him.

Outcasts of this sort are the people who most gladly welcome Christ. People who have nowhere else to go but to him—people so cast down,

so full of sin, so everything but what they ought to be—these are the people to whom Christ is very precious. "Oh," says one, "but I do not feel like that. I cannot feel my guilt as I should." Very well, then, you are one of the outcasts among the outcasts: you do not think yourself to be so good even as they are. You are in your own esteem one of the veriest outcasts of them all, because you lack even the feeling of your needs. You say, "I have a hard heart. I cannot see sin as others have seen it who have found Christ: I wish I could. I smite my breast and mourn that I cannot mourn, for if aught is felt it is only pain to find that I cannot feel. I seem made of hell-hardened steel which will not melt or break." Well, I see what you are, but "such were some of us," we also knew our insensibility, and lamented that we could not lament. But he gathered us, and there stands the text, "He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." If you have not a broken heart, only Christ can give it you. If you cannot come to him *with* it, come to him *for* it. If you cannot come to him wounded, come to him that he may wound you and make you whole. You need bring nothing to Jesus. I would like to whisper in your ear just this—that those people who think themselves insensible generally think so because they are more than usually sensitive; and those who think that they do not feel are usually those who feel most. I do not think we are ever good judges of our own feeling in this matter. The day may come when, in looking back, you will say, "I did after all mourn over sin, when I thought that I did not; I had such a sense of how black it was, that I felt I was not mourning enough! even when I was deeply mourning." Brother, you never will mourn enough. Enough! Would oceans full of tears be enough to mourn the guilt of sin? No, but, blessed be God, we are not asked to repent or to mourn up to a certain standard. O outcast soul, trust thou in Jesus, and he will save thee.

I must not dwell, however, on this class, but proceed further to notice that there is another sort of people who are even more truly the outcasts of Israel, whom Jesus gathers. I mean *the backsliders from the church*—the outcasts of Israel who have been put out, and properly put out, for their unholy lives and inconsistent actions: those whom the church is obliged, alas, to look upon as diseased members that must be removed; sickly sheep that infect the flock, and that must be put away; lepers that must be set aside from the camp. O wanderer, banished from a church, there is a word in the gospel to thee also, even to the backslider! The Lord calls back his wandering children. Though his church does right to put out those who do dishonour to his holy name, yet she would do wrong if she did not follow her Lord in saying, "Return, ye backsliding children." It is not easy to persuade one who has been a backslider to come back to his first love. The return journey is uphill, and flesh and blood do not assist us in it. Many new converts come, but the old wanderers remain outside, and sometimes they do this because they fancy they will not be welcome. But if you are sincerely repenting of the sin which has put you away from the church, the church of Christ will be glad to receive you; and if you be indeed the Lord's believing one, though you have defiled yourself yet he does not forget you. He does earnestly remember you still, and he bids you come in all your

defilement and wash in his atoning blood; for the fountain that he has opened is not only for strangers, when they are at first brought nigh, but it is opened "for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem," for those who know the Lord, that they may be daily purged from their transgressions, and be cleansed from the filthiness of their backslidings. The Lord gathers together those who have been carried captive by their sins, and makes them once more to dwell in the land of uprightness, and all his wandering sheep he brings back to himself.

The expression of the text may certainly be applied to *those who have loved the Lord for years, but who have fallen into great depression of spirit*. We happen, every now and then, to meet with some of the best of God's people who get into the Slough of Despond, and stick there by the month together—ay, by the year together. There are believers who take periodically to despondency, as birds do to moulting, and when the fit is on them you cannot cheer or comfort them. Then they write bitter things against themselves, and call themselves all the ugly names in the dictionary, until they make us smile to hear them, because we know how mistaken they are. We are admiring their consistency, and they are mourning over their foolishness. We see their generosity towards the cause of God, and their devotion to everything that is good; yet they say there is nothing good in them. We know where they are; for we have been laid in iron ourselves, and set fast in the very same stocks. What a mercy it is that, when you who love the Lord thus sit down and commune with your despondencies—I mean you, Miss Much-afraid, you, Mr. Ready-to-halt, and you, Mr. Feeblemind,—my Lord does not leave you, nor judge you as you judge yourselves, but he is pleased to gather together in mercy those who think themselves outcasts in Israel.

Lastly, upon this point, there are some who become outcasts through their love to Christ, and of these the text is peculiarly true. I mean *those who suffer for righteousness' sake, till they are regarded as the off-scouring of all things*. Who that serves God faithfully has escaped the trial of cruel mockings? The names of those who are eminently useful are generally used as footballs for an ungodly world. The world is not worthy of them, and yet their enemies think they are hardly worthy to live in the world. We do not hear much about persecution now-a-days, but in private life there is a world of it; the cold shoulder is given where once friendship was sought; hard, cruel, cutting things are said where once admiration was expressed; and separations take place between very friends because of Christ. It is still true in the Christian's case that a man's foes are they of his own household. But if you should become an outcast upon the face of the earth for Christ's sake, there is this for your comfort—"The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." Of the persecuted he makes pillars in his holy temple for ever. Blessed are those who are outcasts for Christ! Rich are those who are so honoured as to be permitted to become poor for him! Happy they who have had this grace given them to be permitted to lay life itself down for Jesus Christ's sake!

II. Now a few words upon the second point—IN WHAT SENSE THE LORD JESUS GATHERS TOGETHER THESE OUTCASTS OF DIFFERENT SSES. Of course I should have to vary the explanation to suit each

case, but as that would take a long time, let me say that the Lord Jesus has several ways of gathering together the outcasts.

He gathers them *to hear the gospel*. Preach Jesus Christ and they will come. Both outcast saints and outcast sinners will come to hear the charming sound of his blessed name. They cannot help it. Nothing draws like Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ next gathers them *to himself*. The parable of the wedding feast is repeated over again, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." "Bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." In this sort the Lord Jesus Christ gathers multitudes where he is faithfully preached. He gathers all sorts of characters, and especially the odds and ends of society—the despised of men and the despised of themselves. He gathers them to himself. And oh, what a blessed gathering-place that is where there is cleansing for their filthiness, health for their disease, clothing for their nakedness, and all-sufficient supplies for their abundant necessities. He gathers them to himself, which is to gather them to God—to gather them to blessedness and peace through reconciliation with the Father. "To him shall the gathering of the people be."

When he has done that, he gathers them *into the divine family*. He takes the outcasts and makes them children of God—heirs with himself. From the dunghill he lifts them, and sets them among princes. He takes them from the swine-trough, and puts the ring on their fingers and the shoes on their feet, and they sit down at the Father's table to feast and to be glad. Jesus Christ, as the good Shepherd, gathers the lost sheep, the lame, the halt, the diseased, and feeds them, and makes them to lie down, and restores their souls, and finally leads them to the rich pastures of the glory-land.

In due time the Lord gathers together the outcasts *into his visible church*. As David enrolled a company of men that were in debt, and discontented, so does Jesus Christ still gather the indebted ones and the malcontents and makes them his soldiers; and these are known as the church militant. Surely as David did great exploits by those Pelethites and Cherethites, and Gittites, and strange men of foreign extraction whom he gathered to himself, so does Jesus of Nazareth do great things by those great sinners whom he greatly forgives—those hard-hearted ones whom he so strangely changes and makes to be the Old Guard of his army. Yes, he gathers them into his church, and he gathers them *into his work*. The outcasts of Israel he uses for his own glory.

And when he has done that, he gathers them *into heaven*. What a surprise it must be for any man to find himself in heaven, when he remembers where he once was; but for the outcast to remember the ale-bench on which he sat and soaked himself in liquor till he degraded himself below the brute beast, and now to be cleansed in the Redeemer's blood, and to sit among the angels—this will be surprising grace indeed. "Oh, to think," one might well say, "that I who was once in lewd company, polluted and defiled, am now made to wear a crown, and sit at the Redeemer's feet!" When we reach heaven, brethren, I do not suppose that we shall forget all the past; and sometimes it must burst in upon us as a strangely divine instance of love that Christ should

have brought *us* there, and set *us* among the peers of his realm. And yet he means to do it; and you, Mrs. Much-afraid—you will be there; and you who think “surely Satan will have me!” you will be there. You who are stumbling over every straw; you who seem stopped by every little gully in the road, and who fancy, “Surely, there is no grace in my heart,” and yet you are still holding on, “faint, yet pursuing”; you who touch the hem of Christ’s garment, but have such very little faith that you are afraid that you have none at all, you shall get up from that mourning and moaning, you shall rise from that despondency and distress; and among the sweetest music of heaven shall be your songs of gratitude and joy. “He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.”

III. Well, now, WHAT IS THE LESSON OF THIS? I think there are three lessons, and I will just hint at them.

One is this—*encouragement to those who are unworthy, or who think themselves so, to go to Jesus Christ to-night.* I have been trying to think of all I know, and I have lifted up my heart to the Holy Spirit to guide me that I may cheer some discouraged one. It was my object last Sunday night to comfort the broken-hearted, and I do not seem to have got out of that vein yet. I believe there are some here whom God has sent me after who really believe themselves to be out of the region of hope. My dear friend, if God gathers together the outcasts, why should he not gather you? And if it be true that Jesus Christ does not look for goodness, but that he only considers our sin and misery, why should he not look upon you? May I urge you to go and try my Master; and if you go to him, confessing your unworthiness and trusting yourself with him, if he does not save you I would like to know it, because you will be the first person I have ever heard of that did trust himself with Jesus and was rejected. It shall not be the case, whatever your condition may be, however desperate your state. You think your condition to be worse than I have pictured it to be, and you fancy that I cannot know anything about how bad you are. Well, I do not know your special form of rebellion, but you are the very person I mean for all that. I say, if thou be as black as hell, if thou be as foul as the Stygian bog, if thou have sinned till thy sins cannot be counted, and if thy crimes be so heinous that infinite wrath is their just desert, yet come and look to those five wounds and to that sacred head once wounded, and to that heart pierced with the spear. There is life in a look at Jesus crucified. Wilt thou try it? As surely as God’s word is true, if thou dost but glance thine eye at him who “died the just for the unjust” thou shalt be brought to God and reconciled, and that now—*now*—while sitting in that seat, ere yet the last word of this sermon shall be uttered: for whosoever believeth in him shall be saved. Like “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” O that thou wouldst believe on Jesus now. We sometimes sing,

“Venture on him: venture wholly.

Let no other trust intrude.

None but Jesus

Can do helpless sinners good.”

But, sinner, it is not a venture. As surely as ever you cast yourself upon him he will be sure to save you. I will not multiply words, but I would if I thought words would draw you. I pray the blessed and eternal Spirit sweetly to influence your minds, young people, to-night—and old people, too, and middle-aged people, too—that you may have done with trying to do anything, or to be anything, in order to your own salvation, and know that it was all done when Jesus bled and died, all finished when he cried “It is finished”; and you have only to take believingly what he presents to you, and accept him as your all in all. God help you to do it!

The second reflection is this. *If Jesus Christ received some of us when we felt ourselves to be outcasts, how we ought to love him!* It does us good to look back to the hole of the pit whence we were digged. We get to be very top-lofty at times, my brethren. We are wonderfully big, are we not? Are not we experienced Christians now? Why, we have known the Lord these five-and-twenty years. Dear me, how important we are! And perhaps we are deacons of churches, or, at any rate, we have a class in the Sunday-school, and we pray in the prayer-meeting: considerable importance attaches to us, and we are high and mighty on that account. Ah! I have heard say of a man worth his thousands that once he had not a shirt to his back, and if he recollected what he sprang from he would not carry his head so high. I do not see much in that, but I do see something in this—that if we recollected the time when we were dead in trespasses and sins, when we had not a rag to cover us, when we were under God’s frown, and were heirs of wrath even as others—if we recollected our lost and ruined state by nature, I am sure that we should not lift our heads so very loftily, and want to have respect paid to us in the church, or think that God ought not to deal so very hardly with us, as if we had cause for complaint. Dear friends, let us remember what we used to be, and that will keep us low in our own esteem. But, oh, how it will fire us with zeal to remember from what a depth he has lifted us up. Did Jesus save such a wretch as I was? Then for him would I live and for him would I die. This ought to be the utterance of us all. We ought to live in that spirit. God grant we may!

Then, again, let us always feel that *if the Lord Jesus Christ took us up when we were not worth having, we will never be ashamed to try and pick up others who are in a like condition.* We will not count it any lowering of our dignity to go after the most fallen of all. We will reckon that they are no worse than we were if we were viewed from a certain point, and we will therefore aim at their conversion, hope for it, and expect it. This lesson is peculiarly applicable to some Christians here present. Dear brothers and sisters, if you really feel yourselves to have been outcasts, and yet have been received into the divine family, and are now on the road to heaven, I ask you to pay every attention to any whom you meet with who are now what you were once. If you meet with any in great despair of soul, say, “Ah, I must be a comforter here, for I have gone through this; and I will never let this poor soul go till by God’s help I have cheered him.” If you meet with one who is an open sinner, perhaps you will have to say to yourself, “I was an open sinner too;” but if not, say, “My sins were more

secret, but still they were as bad as his ; and therefore I have hope of this poor soul, and will try whether he cannot be loved to Christ by me." Mark my expression—"loved to Christ," for this is the power we must use—sinners are to be loved to Christ. The Holy Spirit uses the love of saints to bring poor sinners to know the love of Christ. Search after them, and do not let them perish. May God put this resolve into your soul—"If there is anything that I can do in the name of Jesus, and with the power of the Holy Ghost upon me, that might save that soul, it shall be done ; and, if that soul dies lost, when I hear the passing bell I will, God helping me, be able to say, 'I did set Christ before that soul. I did plead with that conscience. I did seek to bring that sinner to Jesus.'"

The outcast, when converted, should seek after his brother outcasts. Young man, did you ever swear ? seek the conversion of swearers. Young man, have you been fond of the card-table ? Have you been a frequenter of low resorts of pleasure ? Then addict yourself to looking after persons of the same sort. George Whitefield says that after his own conversion his first concern was the conversion of those with whom he had taken pleasure in sin ; and he had the privilege of seeing many of them brought to Christ. Have you been a man of business, and have you been associated in wrongdoing with others ? Seek the salvation of those who were associated with you. It is a natural obligation which Christ imposes upon all of any special sort, that they should seek those of their own sort, and labour to bring them to repentance.

May God bless you, beloved. We shall soon be in heaven. I can see some here to-night who, owing to their age, cannot be long before they enter the glory of Christ ; and others of us who are younger do not know, from feebleness of health, how long it may be before we see the face of the Beloved. But we would say of him to-night, what a blessed Saviour he is, and what an infinity of love there must be in him ever to have revealed himself to such as we are. Oh, when shall we be near him, and worship him for ever and ever ? Make no tarrying, O our Beloved !

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxlvii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—587 ; 147 (Song II.) ; 784.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BELIEVER IN THE BODY AND OUT OF THE BODY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 2ND, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight :) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."—2 Corinthians v. 5—10.

It is quite clear that the apostle did not consider his body to be himself. He speaks of it as being the frail tent or tabernacle in which he dwelt, and again as the garment with which for a while he was clothed. That tent or tabernacle he expected to see dissolved, and that garment he expected to put off. He distinguished between the outward man which would perish, and the inward man, which was his true self, which he speaks of as "renewed day by day." The apostle reckoned upon living here in the body, according to the divine will, till he had finished the work which was given him to do, and then he expected to put off his mortal flesh, and to be a spirit unclothed and disembodied. Such is the condition at the present time of all the saints who have departed; they are well described as "the spirits of just men made perfect." With the exception of Enoch and Elias, who carried their bodies with them into the celestial world, all departed believers are now spirits unclothed of their bodies, and wearing only such array as befits spiritual existences. Is it difficult to conceive of them in that condition? I do not think it should be. Spirits *without* bodies are not such marvellous things as spirits *in* bodies. You every day as you walk the streets meet spirits in bodies, spirits that quicken flesh and bone and muscle, and move a mass of material from place to place. If we had never seen such a thing as a body kept in life and filled with power by an immaterial, invisible, and spiritual substance, it would be a very hard thing to

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realize it. No man among us knows how it is that this inner spirit of ours is connected with the body. Where is the point of union? What is the link between soul and sinew? Where does spirit begin and where does matter end? We know that if we will to move our arm it is moved, but how does the mind that wills manage to grasp the materialism which obeys its bidding? How is spirit capable of acting upon matter at all? How is it that a spirit can dwell within an abode of flesh, look out of these eyes, listen through these ears, speak by these lips, and perform its will by these hands? Eyes and ears and hands are but earth; they are made of such matter as we meet with in other parts of the solid world, mere dust of the earth, materialism wisely moulded, but yet corruptible materialism: and yet the soul somehow manages to indwell and inhabit its house of clay—a far more wonderful thing it seems to me than for a spirit to exist without a body. We shall find it easy to conceive of a spirit disentangled of materialism in proportion as we have learned to meditate upon spiritual things, and to feel the powers of the world to come. Multitudes around us know nothing of anything which does not appeal to their senses, but the man who has been renewed by the Spirit of God is himself made spiritually minded, and hence the idea of disembodied spirits is not strange to him. Let us, according to Scripture, look forward to a condition in which our perfected spirits shall abide with Christ, “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans viii. 28).

Yet Paul did not expect that the disembodied state would last for ever, for he was assured of the resurrection of the body. He did not despise the body so as to hope never to see it again, but he reckoned that after it had been put off it would undergo a change, and thus would be so renovated that at the coming of the Lord he would put it on afresh, and so his spirit would again be clothed. He expected that mortality would be swallowed up of life, and we also confidently indulge the same hope. The fabric which was put into the ground when the believer was buried was sown in corruption, we expect to see it raised in incorruption. That which we laid in the tomb the other day was a poor dishonoured corpse on which decay was working its fierce will, but we shall see it raised in glory, radiant with the light which made Moses' face to shine. That which we committed to another earth we lowered into the grave in weakness, but it shall as surely rise in power. That which was buried was a soulish body, only fit for the natural soul, but not adapted for the movements and aspirations of the regenerated spirit; but we know that when it shall rise it will be a spiritual body adapted to our highest nature, fitted to be the palace of that gracious life which makes us sons of God. The apostle's great expectation was the perfection of his entire manhood, spirit, soul and body in Christ Jesus. He was confident in the expectation that though he would be unhoused for awhile by the dissolving of his earthly tabernacle, he would soon enter into a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens, and stand before the presence of God both as to his body and his soul made perfect in Christ Jesus. This was his confident expectation.

From the text it is clear that this belief had a powerful influence over the apostle. It had especially two effects upon him: one was to make him “always confident,” and the other was to create in him a high

ambition ; "wherefore," says he, "we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." He felt that wherever he might be, and in whatever condition he might exist, the only thing he had to care for was that he might be pleasing to him who had redeemed him with his precious blood ; and so whether in the body or out of the body it mattered little to him so long as he could but be accepted of the Lord in Jesus Christ.

Of the apostle's *confidence* and *ambition* we are going to speak this morning as the Spirit of God may graciously help us.

I. And first, dear friends, THE BELIEVER HAS GROUND FOR CONSTANT CONFIDENCE. The apostle tells us, "Therefore we are always confident ;" and then again, lest we should lose the sense by the interjected sentence in the seventh verse, he says again, "We are confident, I say." The condition, then, of the Christian, when he is living in faith of resurrection and eternal life, is a condition of continual confidence, a confidence which regards both the life which now is, and the state in which we expect to live before we reach the fulness of the promised glory : a confidence which concerns the present state,—for while we are at home in the body we are always confident : a confidence which equally concerns, and rather more, so the state which is to come, for "we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

First, let me speak with you upon *the confidence which the believer has in reference to his present condition while he is at home in the body*. Our translators have been somewhat unfortunate in their choice of terms in this instance, for they have lost part of the interest of the passage. We should have seen more beauty in these words if they had given us their literal meaning a little more closely. Let me read them to you as they may be read : "We are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are from home as to the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be from home as to the body, and to be at home with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether from home, or at home, we may be accepted of him." You see the point lies in *at home* and *from home*. These words are as near an approach to the original as could readily be found, though they do not exhaust the sense of the Greek terms. Here, then, in the present state we are said to be at home in the body ; but we are at home in a very modified sense, for it is a home which is not a home, but only a frail lodging, a temporary tenement to accommodate us till we reach our true and real home in the New Jerusalem. It is such a home as a soldier has in the camp at a bivouac, or as a passenger has when he is crossing from continent to continent. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had each a home, but it was in a strange country, and they were daily looking for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. While we are in this present state we are at a disadvantage, for we are dwelling in a house which is not as yet in our home-country, and by it we are kept from our real home in the fatherland above. In a sense, however, this body is a home, for here dwells the living, thinking, active mind, somewhere in the brain, whence it spreads itself and rules all the members of the body. We know that within the walls of this earthly fabric our spirit is ordained to live for awhile, a lamp burning within a pitcher, a precious

jewel set in a ring of clay. It is a house for which we have no little affection, and we are loath to quit it.

"For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing, anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of this house of clay,
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?"

We complain of the infirmities of our bodies, but we are in no hurry to leave them; they threaten to fall upon us in their decay, but we linger in them still, till death serves a writ of ejectment, and at the same time pulls down the tenement. We have some of us lived in our body for forty years, some of you for sixty or seventy years, and it is natural that we should have made a home of it, such as it is, and it is small marvel that we are in no haste to emigrate, and even the temptation of that brighter home, and the "many mansions," is not always enough to make us wish to be gone.

But yet this body is not a fitting home for us, and we often discover by experience how inconvenient it is. It is a poor old tent, easily overturned, constantly getting rent, and the older it gets the more trouble it takes to patch it up and to keep it in habitable repair. In the course of years it has become soiled and creased, and worn like the tents of Kedar; with the wear and tear of many years it becomes more and more evident that it is not a worthy dwelling-place for the child of a King, nor a fit abode for an immortal spirit, born from on high. We have suffered many inconveniences from this crumbling tabernacle in many ways, but especially in spiritual things: we have been willing to watch, but the body has been inclined to sleep, the spirit has been willing, but the flesh has been very weak. We have been cumbered with weariness, pain, care, and bodily appetite when we have desired to be altogether engrossed with heavenly things. Sometimes, when we would sing, a throbbing headache makes us sigh; when we would rejoice with joy unspeakable a palpitating heart depresses us; and when we would go about our Master's business a lame foot or a decaying constitution hinders us, so that we dwell in a house which is beneath the quality of so noble a creature as a spirit. We have to put up with flesh and blood, but we are outgrowing them—we feel we are; there is a something within us which warns us that, like certain of the sea creatures which have to break their shells up as they grow, so we are growingly in need of another and better abode. We are like the young chick within the egg-shell—it has been a home for us until now, but it is becoming too strait for us, we begin to chip it, and we sometimes wish it would break altogether, that we might enjoy fuller liberty. "We that are in this body do groan, being burdened," and groan we shall till the day of our full redemption and the deliverance of the body from the bondage of corruption.

"Welcome, sweet hour of full discharge,
That sets my longing soul at large,
Unbinds my chains, breaks up my cell,
And gives me with my God to dwell."

According to the expression of the Greek, ours is a home in a foreign country, we are not dwelling among our own people at this present, but we are exiles in a far off land. We are not alone, for a numerous

band of our brothers and sisters are with us, even as the Jews found company of their own race in Babylon, in whose songs and sighs they could unite; but this is exile to us, we have no inheritance here. "A possession of a burying place" is all that we need ask for, and all that we shall soon have, for this world is not our rest. The Lord has not been pleased to give us our portion in this life, our inheritance lies on the other side of Jordan. We are at home in the body, but, as I have already said, it is but a lodging place in the midst of a strange country in which we are pilgrims and sojourners, as all our fathers were. We are wayfaring men hastening away and passing through a foreign land amongst people who speak not our tongue, know not our customs, understand nothing of the place to which we are going, and therefore cannot comprehend us, but even think us mad when we talk about another country, of which they have no idea, and for which they have no longing. We are at home only in a narrow sense, as a man may be said to be at home when, being in banishment, he takes up his abode for awhile in a foreign town; it can never be more than this.

It is a home, too, which keeps us from our true home. We are not yet where we can see our Lord, and hear his voice: we are not yet in the "rest which remaineth for the people of God." To-day we are at school, like children whose great holiday joy is to go home. We are labourers, and this is the work field; when we have done our day's work we shall go home, but this is the workshop, not the home. It is a very sweet thing after a week of hard work to reach home at last, to take off one's dusty clothes and throw them aside, and feel that toil is over for the present, and rest has come. In this world we cannot find a total rest so as to be completely at ease and at home, we shall only reach that happy condition when we are out of this foreign world. No sense of perfect home rest ever comes over the soul while we are here, except as faith anticipates the joys prepared above. There remaineth a rest for the people of God, but in this body and in this world it is not to be had.

Home is the place where one feels secure; our house is our castle. Outside in the world men watch your words, and if they can they misrepresent or misinterpret them. You have to fight a battle of life outside, but it is a very blessed thing if the battle is over when you cross your own threshold; when you are no longer misunderstood, but are appreciated and loved around your own fireside. Beneath our own dear roof-tree there is nobody to catch us up, nobody to cavil at us, but wife and children and friends love us and delight in us. Well, brethren, we find no such home spiritually in this world, for this is the place of conflict and watchfulness. Here we dwell among enemies, and we have sorrowfully to cry, "My soul is among lions, among those that are set on fire of hell." We sing

"Woe's me that I in Mesech am
A sojourner so long;
That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong.

"My soul with him that hateth peace
Hath long a dweller been;
I am for peace; but when I speak,
For battle they are keen.

"My soul distracted mourns and pines
To reach that peaceful shore,
Where all the weary are at rest,
And troublers vex no more."

In heaven there will be no foes to watch against, nor men of our own household to be our worst enemies. Home, sweet home, is to be found above, and from that home our present home in the body is keeping us.

Home, too, is the place of the closest and sweetest familiarities. There all unbend. The judge takes off his gown, and the soldier his sword, and both sport with their children. He who wears his buckram out of doors, finds himself stripped of it when he comes amongst his own kith and kin. There is the kiss of affection, there are the blandishments of love. Here, alas, our spirits cannot take their fill of heavenly familiarities, for distance comes between. We long for the vision of love, but it comes not as yet: but up there, what indulgence shall be accorded to us! What discoveries of the love of God in Christ Jesus! Then shall the cry of the spouse in the song be fulfilled for ever and ever,—“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.” Then shall the inmost heart of Christ be known to us, and we shall dwell in him for ever and ever in closest communion. This home of ours in the body keeps us away from such intercourse with God as the glorified ones above enjoy without ceasing: said I not truly that our present state has its drawbacks, such as make a man sigh and cry to be gone?

But, dear friends, the main point in which the present state is at a disadvantage compared with the future one is this, that here we have to live entirely by faith. We walk here by faith, not by sight. You believe in God, but you have not beheld his glory as the blessed dead have done. You believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, but it is in one “whom having not seen you love.” You believe in the Holy Spirit, and you have been conscious of his presence by faith, but there is a something better yet; a clearer sight is yet to be had, which we cannot enjoy while we tarry here. At present we take everything on the testimony of God’s word and the witness of his Spirit: but we have not yet seen the celestial city, nor heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps, nor eaten at the banquets of the glorified. We enjoy a foretaste of all these, and anticipate them by faith, but actual enjoyments are not for this world. What a man seeth why doth he yet hope for? As this is the realm of hope we cannot expect to see, but we are going to the place where we shall not so much believe as behold, where we shall not so much credit as enjoy. We are nearing the country where we shall

“See, and hear, and know,
All we desired or wished below.”

And faith shall be exchanged for the clearest sight. Here we gaze through the telescope at heavenly things, but we cannot get into contact with them as we wish to do; but when we have shaken thee off, O flesh, then shall we come actually into sight and fruition, and shall behold the Saviour, as he is, face to face.

These are the inconveniences, then, of this present state, but Paul despite all these disadvantages was confident. “We are always confident,” says he. He was contented. he was happy, he was courageous,

he was steadfast still : and why ? Why, brethren, because he had a hope of the immortality to be revealed. He knew that as soon as ever he shook off this body his soul would be with Christ. He knew that in some future day, when Christ should come, his body and his soul, re-married, should be for ever beatified with the Lord, and therefore he counted all the disadvantages of this life to be as nothing—"these light afflictions which are but for a moment." He laughed to scorn anything that he had to suffer here below, because of the "exceeding weight of glory" which his faith realised as soon to be revealed.

Observe, also, that his confidence came from God's work in his soul. "He that hath wrought us to the selfsame thing is God." He was sure he should one day be perfect and immortal, because God had begun to work in him to that very end. When the statuary takes the block of stone and begins to carve it into a statue we get the promise of that which is to be. I no sooner see the master workman take the first stroke than I feel sure of a work of art, because I see that he has begun to work towards that end. From that work the mason may turn aside, or he may die, and therefore I cannot be sure that from the chosen stone there will leap out by-and-by the statue. But God never undertakes what he does not finish, he never fails for want of power, or because of a change of mind; and so if to-day I be the quarried block of marble, if he has begun to make the first chippings in me of genuine repentance and simple faith towards God, I have the sure prophecy that he intends to work upon me till he has worked me up into the perfect image of Christ, to be immortal and immaculate like my Lord. Paul by faith knew that by a divine decree before all worlds he was predestinated to be made a perfect and immortal being. He saw that God had created him for that very purpose, and new created him to that end : he felt the working of God within him—he could feel the Spirit of God operating in him, giving him newness of life, causing him to hate sin and to receive more and more fully the likeness of Christ his Master. "He has worked me up to the selfsame thing," said the apostle, and therefore he felt confident that to this end he should be brought.

Again, there was another ground of confidence—"who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." You know what an "earnest" is. It is not a mere pledge, for a pledge is returned when that which it certifies is given; but an earnest is a part of the promise itself. A man is to receive a wage at the end of the week; in the middle of the week he obtains a part of the money, and this is more than a pledge of the rest: it is an earnest of the whole, a most sure and positive pledge of that which remains unpaid. The man who has received the Spirit of God in his soul has obtained the immortal seed which will expand into perfection, he is forgiven and accepted, and the Spirit helps his infirmities in prayer, fills him with faith, perfumes him with love, adorns him with holiness, and makes him commune with God—all this is the earnest of his perfected condition, and the beginning of the joys to come, the infallible assurance of all those joys which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him. No man ever had the Spirit of God dwelling in him, moulding him to the divine will, but what he ultimately obtained the heavenly state, for the Spirit of God leaves not his work undone, neither does he bestow divine gifts to take them away again. "There-

fore," says Paul, "we are always confident." We have a hope which entereth into that which is within the veil, we know what image the Lord is working in us, and we have received the Holy Spirit as the earnest of eternal blessedness: therefore, come what may, we are filled with a sacred courage and a sublime peace which make us await the future with calmest confidence.

Now we shall pass on to the next point, which is, that *Paul was equally confident about the next state into which he expected soon to pass*, namely, the condition of a disembodied spirit. Nature when it acts apart from grace shrinks from the thought of dying, but death can have no terrors for the man whom it lands in a condition which he prefers. By turning to the text, we see that Paul preferred the state into which death would cast him. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," that is, we have a preference for being away from this home in the body, that we may be at home with the Lord. He looked at the state into which he would soon come by the dissolution of his body as a more desirable one than even his life of confidence here below. Yet let us observe that it was not because Paul thought it would be better to be without a body than with one that he thus spoke. He has told us already "not for that we would be unclothed": he did not desire to be a disembodied spirit for its own sake. There are certain mystics who look upon the body as a wretched incumbrance; the thought of resurrection has no pleasure to them, and therefore they spiritualize the doctrine, and make it to be no resurrection at all. The apostle was not of their mind, he called the body the temple of God, and desired its perfection, not its destruction. The Lord has constituted man to be a wonderful combination of many forms of existence, a link between the angel and the animal, a mixture of the divine and the material, a comprehensive being taking up into himself the heaven which is above him and the earth on which he treads. Our great Creator does not mean us to be maimed creatures for ever, he intends us to dwell with him eternally in the perfection of our humanity. When our Lord Jesus died he did not redeem one half of man, but the whole man, and he means not to leave any part of the purchased possession in the enemy's hands. We ought not to think that to be half a man would be more desirable than to be a whole man, for our Lord Jesus thinks not so. We should be waiting for the second advent of our Lord, who will call his saints from their tombs, and redeem them altogether from the power of the grave. We should even now rejoice that this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

It will be evident to you all, dear friends, that if Paul preferred the disembodied state to this, as the text tells us he did, then the spirits of those saints who have left their bodies in the grave are not annihilated—they live on. Paul could not have counted it better to be annihilated than to lead a life of holy confidence. The saints are not dead; our Lord gave a conclusive answer to that error when he said, "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." Those who have departed this life are still

alive: we are sure of that, or else Paul would not have preferred that state. Neither are they unconscious, as some say, for who would prefer torpor to active confidence? Whatever trials there may be in the Christian life here below, the man of faith does really enjoy life, and could not prefer unconsciousness. Neither are the saints in purgatorial fires, as the Babylonish harlot says, for nobody would desire to be tormented, and we may be sure that the apostle Paul would not have been willing rather to be in purgatory than to live here and serve his Lord. Brethren, the saints live, they live in consciousness and in happiness. Moses came and talked with Christ on the mount of Transfiguration, though he had no body, just as readily as Elias did, though that mighty prophet carried his body with him when he ascended in a chariot of fire. The body is not necessary to consciousness, or to happiness. The best of all is, the spirits of the departed are with Christ. "To be with Christ, which is far better," saith the apostle. "For ever with the Lord," their portion is allotted them. It is the Lord's own prayer: "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," and the prayer is fulfilled in them. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

This made the apostle something more than confident and courageous in the prospect of death; he was willing to depart into the disembodied state because he knew he would be at home with the Lord in it. I wish you to dwell a minute on that thought of being at home with the Lord. We rejoice that we have Christ with us here spiritually, for his presence brings us spiritual blessings of a very high order, and joys prophetic of the joys of heaven; but still we have not his bodily presence. We have now a sight of our Lord through a telescope as it were; but we do not see him near at hand. We speak to him as through a trumpet across the sea, we do not talk to him face to face. Ah, what will it be to be at home with Christ! When we reach his own palace gate, and sit at his own board, we shall know him far better than we do now, and he will look more lovely in our eyes than ever because we shall see him more clearly. The sound of his voice will be much sweeter than anything we have heard in the gospel here below, for we shall actually hear him speak. Will we not take our fill of him when we once behold him? Methinks I shall never want to take my eyes off him, but find a heaven, an eternity, an infinity of bliss in drinking him in with all my eyes and all my heart. To be at home with him will be to understand infinitely more of him than we have ever dreamed of as yet. Ah, you do not know his glory, you could not bear to behold it as yet; you would fall at his feet as dead, in a swoon of delight, if you could but gaze upon it while you are yet in this frail body. When disembodied you shall not have the flesh to throw a mist over your eyes, but you shall behold the King in his beauty, and be able to bear the joy.

In that condition to which we are speeding we shall also be beyond all doubt as to the truth of our holy faith. There will be no more mistrust of our Lord or of his promises, and no more shall we doubt the power of his blood or our share in his atoning sacrifice. Sometimes the dark atheistic thought will come, "Is it not all a dream?" You shall never have such a thought there, for you will be at home with Jesus. Now

there arises the troublesome question, Are you a real believer? Has Jesus really washed you in his blood? You will be beyond all such enquiries when you are absent from the body and present with the Lord. Now you have to walk by faith, and you must not try to get beyond faith, for that is the mode of spiritual life for this present state; but after death you will no more walk by faith, you will have sight, and fruition, and these will banish all the doubts which try your faith while in the body. How pleasant and desirable does the prospect of actual fruition cause heaven to become even though we know that for awhile we shall be away from the body.

In the future state we shall communicate with Christ more sensibly than we do now. Here we do speak with him, but it is by faith through the Spirit of God; in the glory land we shall actually speak to him in his immediate presence, and hear his voice while he personally speaks to us. Ah! what we shall have to tell him! What will he have to tell us! Truly, I dare not venture into these great deeps of expectation lest I drown myself in the delights of hope. Oh, the joy which awaits us! It is almost too much for me to think of.

When we are at home with him, without the body, and also, I suppose, even more when we are at home in the resurrection body, we shall have greater capacity for taking in the glory of our Lord than we have now. Sometimes he fills us with his love which passeth knowledge, and then we think we know very much of him; but oh, my brethren, our knowledge is but that of little babes as yet. We are such small and shallow vessels that a few drops of Christ's love soon fill us up, and we begin running over: but he will enlarge us till we hold great measures of him, and then he will fill us with all the fulness of God. You have sometimes tried to imagine what heaven must be. Well, you shall have many such heavens; nay, ten thousand times as much delight in God as you have dreamed of. If even here he does for us exceeding abundantly above what we ask or think, what will he do for us there? As for his person, and his sweetness, and his excellence, and his glory, you have only touched the hem of his garment. You have only, like Jonathan, dipped the end of your rod in that flood of honey, and it has enlightened your eyes: but oh, when you shall be at home with him you shall feast to your heart's content. Here we sip, but there we shall drink full bowls; here we eat our daily morsel, but there the heavenly feast will never break up.

Now, putting these two things together, the present state and the next, we have great reason, like the apostle, to go on from day to day with holy courage and confidence. If the way be rough, it leads to an unspeakably joyful end, so let us trip over it cheerfully; and if the way should grow rougher still, let us show still greater confidence, for one hour with our God will make up for it all, and infinitely more.

II. The last point I can only spend a few minutes upon: it is this—**THE BELIEVER HAS REASONS FOR AN ABSORBING AMBITION.** According to the text, we are to live alone for Jesus,—“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.” From henceforth, my brethren, the one great thing we have to care about is to please our Lord. You are saved, and heaven is your portion; now from this time concentrate all your thoughts, your faculties,

and your energies upon this one design,—to be acceptable with Jesus Christ. Live for him as he has died for you; live for him alone. Believer, it ought to be your ambition to please Christ in every act you do. Do not say “How will this please myself or please my neighbour?” but “How will this please my Lord?” And, remember, it is not by the action alone that he will be pleased, but the motive must be right or you will fail. Oh cry to him to keep your motives clean, pure, elevated, heavenly; for grovelling aims will be a sour leaven, and will render the whole loaf unfit to offer. Nor is it merely the motive, it is the spirit in which the whole thing is done. Labour, brethren, with a divine ambition to please Jesus Christ in your thoughts, in your wishes, in your desires, in everything that is about you. I know you will have to lament many shortcomings and errors; there will be much about you that will be displeasing to him, take care that it is also displeasing to you, and never be pleased with that which does not please him. Never accept anything in yourself which he would not accept. With all your ardent spirit watch every movement of your soul that no power or passion so moves as to vex his Holy Spirit. Seek to please him every moment while you are upon the earth. You know what sort of things Jesus did, and what he would like you to do; follow his every step, obey his every word. He has bidden you walk in holiness as he did, O sin not against him. He bids you clothe the naked, feed the hungry, teach the ignorant, visit the sick, look after the fatherless and widows,—all these things he speaks of as peculiarly pleasing to himself, and as mentionable to the honour of his saints, in the day of his appearing; let these things be in you and abound. Be fruitful in those graces which were most conspicuous in him. Do not let a day pass without doing something with the one object of pleasing Christ in it. We do a great deal because it is customary, or because church opinion expects it, but to do holy acts directly for Christ, simply and alone for love of him,—this should be our constant habit. Have we not some alabaster box to break to anoint *his* head, some tears with which to wash *his* feet? Need I urge that something, however humble, should frequently be done, even at the cost of self-denial, for his dear sake? Yea, let everything be done as unto him.

For then, mark this last, we shall please him in the next state, for “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” The child of God is glad of this. The text might be translated “we shall all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ?” To-day men do not understand us, but they will know us in that day. I will warrant you this one thing, if you will live the most devoted and disinterested life possible, you will find people sneering at you and imputing your actions to selfish motives, and putting a cruel construction on all you do or say. Well, it does not matter, for we shall all be manifested at the judgment-seat of Christ, before God, and men, and angels. Let us live to please him, for our integrity of motive will be known at the last, and put beyond all dispute. The world said of one man that he preached from selfish motives, while all the time he had no thought but for God’s glory: the Lord will make it clear how false was the judgment of men. They said of another man that he was very earnest, but that he wanted to win popularity; yet all the while he cared not one straw for human praise.

Such a man need not trouble himself, the smoke will clear away in that great day, and he will be seen in his uprightness. If you have lived only to please Christ you need not be afraid of his coming, for in that day he shall clear away all slander and misrepresentation, and you shall stand out vindicated and justified before an assembled universe. In that day, when God shall publicly justify his saints, he will make all men, and angels, and devils know that they are truly just. The solemn verdict of God will be one to which the whole universe of intelligent spirits will give in their assent. They will say "ay" to the sentence passed by the Lord Jesus; they themselves would bring in a verdict in favour of believers in that last testing day if it were left to them. As for the ungodly, the condemning sentence shall be not only just, but such as the whole universe shall assent to. The punishment which God will lay upon sinners for the evil deeds done in the body, will not then be cavilled at as too severe. It will be such a sentence as every intelligent spirit shall be compelled to own to be right. But my brethren, let us so live that while our lives shall challenge no judgment on the score of merit, for that thought we utterly abhor, yet there shall be in our lives evidences of our having received grace from God, evidences of our being acceptable with Christ; for if we do not so live, we may talk what we like about faith, and boast what we please about experience, but without holiness no man shall see the Lord. If our life has never had in it that which pleases Christ, then the evidence will be taken against us that we were not pleasing unto him, that we had no spiritual life, that we had no grace in the heart, and that we were not saved. Then there will remain nothing for us but to be condemned with the ungodly. Come, then, brothers and sisters, do not let us care whether we live or die, let us not suffer ourselves to be alarmed about the passage out of this world into the next state, but let us be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

I have been twice to the grave this week, with two of our aged friends, a sister and a brother, who have passed into the glory, and the lesson which they have left behind for our edification is—let us not be careful whether we be at home in the body or whether we be at home with Christ: but, living or dying, let us be careful to please Jesus. I wish I knew how to enforce this lesson, and send it home to every believer's heart, but I must rather pray the Holy Spirit so to do. May he write it on my soul and on yours, and may we all be found practising it from this time forth even for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Cor. iv. 14—18; v.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—865, 858, 850.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ENQUIRE OF THE LORD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 9TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the Lord."—Ezekiel xxxvi. 37, 38.

MULTIPLICATION is a very ancient form of blessing. The first benediction pronounced upon man was of this sort, for we read in the first chapter of Genesis, "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." That same blessing was pronounced again when God accepted his servant Noah, and entered into covenant with him. We read in Genesis ix. 1 that "God blessed Noah and his sons and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." This also constituted a main part of the blessing promised to faithful Abraham. In Genesis xxii. 17, and many other places, we read to this effect, "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." This was the blessing of God's chosen people, a blessing which all the malice of Pharaoh could not turn aside, for the more the Israelites were oppressed the more they multiplied. David in the hundred and seventh Psalm uses the expression, "he blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly": so that clearly increase of numbers in families and nations was anciently regarded as a token of divine favour.

In a spiritual sense, this is the blessing of the church of God. When the church is visited by the power of the Holy Spirit she is increased on every side. When a Church in the midst of a vast population remains stationary in numbers, or even becomes smaller, no man can see in such a condition the marks of God's blessing. Certainly it would be a novel sort of benediction; for the first blessing, the blessing of Pentecost, resulted in three thousand being added to the church in one day, and we find

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afterwards that "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." We read in the Acts of the Apostles that the churches "walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Ever since those early days, when the Lord has been with his people they have increased in numbers, their children have sprung up as among the grass, and as willows by the water courses. When they have been "minished and brought low" it has been because they have departed from the truth or lost their first love. The clearness of gospel testimony has been dimmed, spirituality has been at a low ebb, the Holy Ghost has been despised, and he has suspended his operations, and then the church has dwindled down till she has had little more than a name to live : but as soon as ever the Lord has returned to her she has become a fruitful mother, and her children have cried out, "the place is too strait for us, give place to us that we may dwell." When the Lord has sent forth his power with the preaching of the gospel, converts have been as the drops of the dew and as the sands upon the sea-shore, innumerable. It is plain that one of the blessings which we as a church should seek with all our hearts is that of continual increase. The entire church of God should look for the daily multiplication of the spiritual seed. We have the promise of it in the text, but there is appended to it this condition, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them : I will increase them with men like a flock." Every true Christian desires to see the church increase ; at any rate, I should pity the man who thinks himself a Christian and yet has no such wish. "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory" is the natural aspiration of every child of God, and if any man has persuaded himself into the idea that he is a child of God, and yet does not desire to see the glory of the Lord made manifest by the conversion of multitudes, I pity the condition of his heart and of his understanding. I trust we all feel the missionary spirit ; we all long to see the kingdom of the Lord come, and to see the converts in Zion multiplied. But God has appended to the granting of our desire that we should pray for it : we must plead and enquire, or else the increase will be withheld.

Why has the Lord thus made prayer the necessary prelude to blessing ? He has done so in great mercy to our souls. The Lord knows how beneficial it is to us to be much in prayer, and therefore he makes it easy for us to draw near to him. He affords us a multitude of reasons for approaching the mercy-seat, and gives us errands which may be used as arguments for frequent petitioning. When one knocks at a man's door it is a good thing to have some business to do, for then one knocks boldly. If the porter opens and enquires, "Why camest thou hither ?" we can reply, "Good sir, I came on an important errand," and so we are bold to remain at the door. Now, as the Lord loves to commune with his people, he takes care to give them errands upon which they must come to him. We need never be afraid that we shall be interrogated at the gate of mercy, and this stern question put, "What doest thou here ?" for we have always some reason for praying, indeed, every promise is turned into a reason for prayer, because the promise is not to be granted to us till we have pleaded it at the mercy seat.

Moreover, if I may so say, God has in mercy compelled us to prayer by making the pleading necessary to the blessing. We must pray ; we

are unblessed unless we pray ; and therefore our necessities drive us to the mercy-seat. Though we may be so low in grace and so unspiritual that we may feel little positive enjoyment for the moment in prayer, yet pray we must : a sacred compulsion lies upon us arising from our vast necessities. We thank God, then, that he gives us reasons for coming, yea, lays a stress upon us so that we are compelled to draw nigh unto him. Now, let the desire that the church should be increased, which, as I have already said, dwells in the bosom of every child of God, act as a mighty impulse to drive us to earnest, prevailing prayer, for if we are driven to this the church shall be multiplied exceedingly.

This is the object of the discourse of this morning. O Spirit of grace and supplications, be now upon us that we may be saturated with the spirit of prayer. I shall speak upon the text thus : *Why should we arouse ourselves to the enquiry of which the text speaks?* "For this will I be enquired of": next, *how should such a duty as this be performed?* the text will afford us a guide: and, thirdly, *on what ground can any Christian man be aroused from the duty* of uniting with his brethren in enquiring at the hand of the Lord for a blessing?

1. WHY SHOULD WE AROUSE OURSELVES TO THIS ENQUIRY AT THE HANDS OF THE LORD? I do not thus put this question because I think that many of you need instruction as to the necessity for prayer, but because it is good to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance upon this point. The first reason I shall give is this, because *it is a great privilege to be allowed to enquire at the hands of the Lord.* You will see this very vividly if you turn to the twentieth chapter of this prophecy, and read the third verse, "Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Are ye come to enquire of me? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you." Look again at the thirty-first verse of the same chapter, "For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you." What a solemn curse to be denied an audience with God! How terrible a punishment it is when God shuts the gates of prayer, and declares, "I will not be enquired of by you: when you spread forth your hands I will hide my face from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear." A people may get into such a condition of sin, such a wilful state of alienation from God, and disobedience to his commands, that he may say, "I will not be enquired of by you." Now suppose for a moment that it were my painful duty to stand here and say, "Brethren and sisters, it is of no use our praying; the mercy-seat has been abolished; God in anger has bidden the Mediator lay aside his office, and supplication is no longer to be heard." What wringing of hands, what weeping of hearts as well as eyes if it were indeed true that prayer was denied to the people of God! It was a fair token for good when Ezeiel was bidden to say that God had now taken away the curse from his people, and though he had said aforetime, "I will not be enquired of by you," yet now, under the covenant of grace, having forgiven their sins, he mercifully proclaimed, "Thus saith the Lord, For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." As you would be

struck with horror if you were forbidden to pray, so I beseech you use the privilege of prayer while you may. If only some half dozen men had permission to speak into the ear of God, how you would venerate them! How you would wish to be one of their number! If a small chosen band were set apart who alone might ask in faith, and to whom alone the promise would be fulfilled, "Ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you;" how would you envy them their high privilege! Since then at this time you are all, if you be the people of God, made to be a royal priesthood, and the mercy-seat is open to every believer, take care that ye do not despise your birthright. To each one of you the promise is given, "He that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened," and is not this sufficient reason why we should arouse ourselves to use the privilege which the Lord accords to us?

Secondly, *prayer is also to be looked upon as a precious gift of the Spirit of God* as well as a great privilege. Wherever the spirit of prayer exists it is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit himself; and when the text says, "For this will I be enquired of," it is a promise that men shall enquire. It is by virtue of covenant promise and covenant grace that men are made to pray: for the Lord has said, "I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications." Every child of God who understands anything knows that real prayer is "the breath of God in man returning whence it came." It first comes from God, and then it goes back to God. The Spirit knows what the mind of God is, and then he writes the mind of God upon our mind, and thus the desire of the believer is the transcript of the decree of God: hence the success of prayer. Well, my brethren, if united, earnest, hearty enquiry of the Lord be a covenant gift and a work of the Spirit, we dare not despise it, but we would earnestly seek after it. When we obtain a measure of prayerfulness we ought to cultivate it, and seek to make it grow abundantly. Covenant gifts are always to be earnestly coveted, for they are "the best gifts." Remember what blood it was which sealed that covenant, and made it sure to all the seed: you cannot look upon one item of the inheritance which the covenant entails upon the saints without feeling that it cost the Redeemer his heart's blood. Forsake not then the assembling of yourselves together in prayer as the manner of some is, neither neglect the mercy-seat in private, nor fail to enquire at the Lord's hand, for supplication is a covenant gift, and must not be despised by any heir of heaven.

These are two forcible arguments, but here is another. In the third place we must pray, because *it is a needful work in order to the obtaining of the blessing*. The church of God is to be multiplied; but "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of." Remember that this is virtually written at the bottom of every promise. God saith, "I will do this or that," but it is understood that for this he will be enquired of. Doubtless we receive many unasked for favours, but the rule of the kingdom is, "He that asketh receiveth." This rule applies even to the King of the kingdom himself,—*"Ask of me,"* saith God to his own Son, "and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." I must then, brethren, exhort you to be much in enquiring at the Lord's hands,

because countless blessings are suspended upon the exercise of prayer. Imagine for a moment that these blessings should not come; suppose that month after month the particular blessing of the text should be withheld: into what a state of mind would every earnest Christian be brought. No increase—we come to the communion table but report no additions; no need to hold church-meetings, for there are no confessions of faith to be heard, and no converts are coming forward to tell of the power of love divine. Suppose that such a state of stagnation should continue month after month with us! *And why should it not?* It has done so with many others. Then as one after another of the ripe children of God went to heaven there would be gaps in the church roll, and none to fill them, none to be baptised for the dead, none to stand in those places in the ranks from which the pious dead have been removed. May these eyes never look on such a calamity. May this tongue be spending its strength amongst the choirs above long before such a night shall settle down. Ye may well write “*Ishabod*” across the forefront of this house of prayer whenever that shall be, for the glory will have departed. Up to this moment we have never had to sigh and cry because the Lord has left us without an increase; but only suppose that the benediction should be withdrawn. You can cause it to be withdrawn, if so you will, by restraining prayer. Only let the cry which goes up to God continually from thousands of earnest hearts cease for awhile, and it will be a token that the blessing has ceased also. Only as long as there shall be this enquiring at the hand of the Lord can we expect that he will do as he has done, namely, multiply us with men as with a flock. Enquire ye, therefore, eagerly, because the blessing is suspended on it.

Next, we ought to have much of this enquiry, because *it is a business which is above all others remunerative*. Look at the text: “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.” That is a beautiful idea of multitude. You have perhaps seen an immense flock, a teeming concourse of congregated life. Such shall the increase of the church be. But then it is added, to enhance the blessing, “As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts.” This to the Jewish mind conveyed a great idea of number. At the three great feasts of Pentecost, the Passover, and the Feast of Tabernacles, the Israelites were accustomed to offer sacrifices in vast numbers; and therefore lambs and sheep were brought into Jerusalem in such enormous numbers that without a book before me I should not like to mention the figures which have been put down by Josephus and others. We read of Solomon’s offering “an hundred and twenty thousand sheep,” and of seventeen thousand sheep offered in a single day, in Hezekiah’s time; we may therefore imagine what the need was in our Saviour’s day that there should be a sheep market by the Pool of Bethesda, for there would be need of immense lairs for such numerous flocks. Then might the city be described in the language of Isaiah when he said, “All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebajoth shall minister unto thee; they shall come up with acceptance upon mine altar.” Now, saith the Lord, I will not only multiply you as the sheep are multiplied upon Sharon and Carmel, but as the flocks in Jerusalem when they come together from every quarter on solemn feast days, by hundreds and

by thousands. You shall ask, "Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?" The Lord will multiply the people beyond all count. There is this additional beauty about the promise, that the sheep which were brought to Jerusalem on the solemn feasts were not only numerous, but they were the best sheep in the land, because no animal could be offered to God if it had any blemish. The priests were peculiarly careful to select the lambs for the passover and the sheep for the sacrifice, and they were always the pick of the flock, the choice sheep of all the flocks of Palestine. What a mercy when the Lord multiplies the church with a holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem on her solemn feast days! Then, in addition, not only were they the choice of the flock, but they were all consecrated to God, for they were brought to Jerusalem, on purpose to be sacrificed. O happy church which receives a host of self-sacrificing members who do not come to the church in name only, but to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God: to place body, soul, and spirit at the feet of Jesus, and say, "Thine are we, thou Son of David, and all that we have."

See, then, what can be had by enquiring for it. "For *this* will I be enquired of." And what is the "*this*" which is spoken of? Why *this*, that God will give us a numerous people, a choice people, his own elect, and they shall be all consecrated unto himself. They shall give themselves first to the Lord, and afterwards to us by the word of God. This is to be had by praying for it. Ah, my Lord, how foolish are we not to pray more! Thy church has her societies, and her agencies, and so on, and she has perhaps looked to these more than to thee, but thou art our battle-axe and weapons of war, thou canst multiply the people and increase the joy. Thou canst fill the quiver of the church with spiritual children, and thus make her blessed. To thee only can we look for this favour. My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him. The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name. His right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory. Wherefore, O house of Israel, enquire at the hands of the Lord, and a boundless blessing shall come.

I need not stay, I think, to say that it is necessary for us to pray, because *the results of prayer as I have already described them are such as greatly glorify God*. Kindly read the last sentence of the text; it is important: "And they shall know that I am the Lord." When a church is increased largely with choice persons thoroughly consecrated, then the church knows anew that there is a God in Israel; the world also opens its eyes with wonder, and admits that there is something in prayer after all. When the kingdom of God is largely increased in answer to prayer, there is a wonderful power abroad to answer the arguments of sceptics, and put to silence the ribaldry of ungodly tongues. "This is the finger of God," say they. How bitterly they ridiculed Whitefield and Wesley when first they begun to preach the blessed gospel. They were fanatics and enthusiasts, disturbing the peace of the land! They were Jesuits, Jacobites, and I do not know what they were not, but everything conceivable that is bad! But when the Lord put power into those men, and multiplied their adherents by tens of thousands, then presently the world changed its tone, and dreaded and feared those whom they had formerly despised. So it is now. If we do not pray, if

we grow cold in heart, and the blessing is withdrawn, then the worldly wise begin to say, "It is an old, effete doctrine, proclaimed by the last of the Puritans—it is dying out"; but as soon as ever they see God blessing us, and the multitudes coming together, and the church growing to be a power in the land, they like it none the better, but they are obliged to respect it. Oh, that the Lord would stir you up as a church to pray, and do the like with all the churches of the land. This would smite his enemies upon the cheek bone, and silence his adversaries. This would baffle both the scoerner, infidelity, and the harlot, ritualism, and make both scepticism and superstition acknowledge that in the grand old truth of Jesus there still resides the omnipotence of the Lord God.

II. Secondly, let us answer the question—**HOW SHOULD THIS DUTY BE PERFORMED?** First, it should be *by the entire body of the church*. Let us turn to our Bibles and read the text again: "For this will I be enquired of by"—By the ministers? By the elders? By the little number of good people who always come together to pray? Look! Look carefully! "By the house of Israel;" that is by the whole company of the Lord's people. To obtain a great increase there must be unanimous prayer, prayer from the whole house of Israel; every one must join, without exception. Where two or three are met together there will be an answer of peace; the prayer of one prevails; but if ever the house of Israel, the whole company of the faithful, shall get together in prayer, ah, then we shall see the multiplication of saints as the flock of Jerusalem on her solemn feasts; and it will not be till then. When Israel was defeated (at Ai, one of the reasons of their failure was that there was an abominable thing in the tent of Achan, but another cause of defeat was this, that they said "Let not all the people labour thither." A part of the people were to go and take Ai, and the rest were to lie at ease. The church of God will always have ill times so long as a few people are left to do what should be done by all the redeemed. The whole house of Israel must besiege Ai if Ai is to be taken; the whole army of the living God must bend the knee together, and together plead with God if any great victory is to be achieved.

Next, the successful way to enquire of the Lord is for the church to *take personal interest in the matter*. "Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." When the people feel that the conversion of souls is their own personal affair; when the Sunday-school teachers feel that the multiplication of the church would be something done for them, and each Christian labourer feels that he has a personal interest in the saving of souls, then will the Lord's work be done on a great scale. Brethren, when the case of poor sinners becomes our case, and our heart cries, "I must break unless those souls are saved," then we are sure to succeed. If the sinner will not repent, let us break our heart about him. Let us go and tell the Lord his sins, and mourn over them as if they were our own. If men will not believe, let us by faith bring them before God, and plead his promise for them. If we cannot get them to pray, let us pray for them and intercede on their behalf, and in answer to our repentance they shall be made to repent, in answer to our faith they shall be led to believe, and in reply to our prayer they shall be moved to pray. The Lord says he

will do it, but he will have us seek it as a personal favour, that thus our souls may be made earnest in his cause.

The blessing will come in the third place, to *the prayer of a dependent church*. See how it is put: "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, *to do it for them*;" that is to say, they will not dream of being able to do it for themselves, but will apply to God for it. Christian men should never speak of getting up a revival. Where are you going to get it up from? I do not know any place from which you can get it *up* except a place which it is better to have no connection with. We must bring a revival down, if it is to be worth having. We must enquire of the Lord to do it for us. Too often the temptation is to enquire for an eminent revivalist, or ask whether a great preacher could not be induced to come. Now, I do not object to inviting soul-winning preachers, or to any other plans of usefulness; but our main business is to enquire of the Lord, for after all he alone can give the increase. Suppose we collect a crowd of people, what of that? It is a fine thing to put in the papers; but what is the good of it, if it ends there? Suppose we have large services, and fierce excitement, and the whole thing ends in a pack of moonshine, where is the glory to God? On the contrary, his name is dishonoured, and his church is discouraged from making special attempts; but when the holy work begins in prayer, continues in prayer, and everything is confessedly dependent upon the power of God, then the blessing is indeed worth having. Enquire of the Lord to multiply you, and you will be multiplied. We must wait upon God, conscious that we can do nothing of ourselves, and we must look to the Holy Spirit as the alone power for the conversion of souls. If we pray in this dependent way we shall obtain an overflowing answer.

Again, the way to obtain the promised blessing is that the prayer must be offered *by an anxious, observant, enterprising church*. The expression used, "I will be enquired of," implies that the people must think and ask questions, must argue and plead with God. It is well to ask him why he has not given the blessing, and to urge strong reasons why he should now do so. We should quote his promise to him, tell him of our undesert and great need, and then come back again to asking, enquiring, and pleading our cause. Such a church, pleading, will win a blessing beyond all doubt. It must be a church which remembers the waste places; the text puts it in the promise, and it must not be forgotten in the prayer—"The waste cities shall be filled with flocks of men." A church which anxiously remembers the departments of service which are not succeeding, casts a friendly eye over other churches which may be failing, and takes careful notice of those places where the Spirit of God does not seem to be at work, and mentions all those in prayer, is the church to which the promise is made. I pray the Lord to give you, dear brethren, heartbreak over sinners whose hearts do not break, to give you painful anxiety for those who are not anxious; in fact, may God make all the members of this church into anxious enquirers, and when the saved ones are anxious enquirers themselves there will be plenty of anxious enquirers brought from the world. The way to have enquiring sinners is for us to become enquiring saints. When the saints enquire of the Lord the sinners will ask their

way to Zion with their faces thitherward. Every prayer-meeting ought, as a matter of fact, to be an enquirers' meeting, where true hearts behold the beauty of the Lord and enquire in his temple.

If we are to obtain the blessing in answer to prayer, *that prayer must be offered by a believing church*. Oh that we did believe God's promise. The Lord says, "I will be enquired of, to do it for them:" but unbelieving enquiries are only a mockery of God. How few really believe in prayer! I was reading the other day that the Chinese converts of the Inland Mission have shown a feature of piety which is not very common. When they learned that God would hear prayer, they wanted to be always praying, because, they said, "If it be so, that the great God hears prayer, let us ask for a great deal." We do not wonder, therefore, that they have received answers to their believing prayers so remarkable that the missionary scarcely cares to narrate them, lest to unbelievers they should seem to be as idle tales. Indeed, his fears are not at all unreasonable, for in other cases the written lives of praying men have been wretchedly mistrusted. Huntingdon's "Bank of Faith" has been called a bank of nonsense, yet I believe him to have been a thoroughly honest recorder of facts, and quite incapable of a lie. When they read the story of Sammy Hick, and his turning the wind by prayer, most persons are dubious; but why? Bread was needed for a religious meeting, and no flour could be had, for the mill could not go without wind. Hick took his bag of corn to the miller and bade him grind it. "But there is no wind, Sammy," said the miller. "Never mind, there will be if you only put the corn into the hopper." It was put in, the wind ground the wheat, and then it ceased. "Ah," people say, "that is a Methodist story." Yes, it is, and there are many others of the same kind; and some of us have had them happen to ourselves. Answers to prayer do not now appear to us to be contrary to the laws of nature; it seems to us to be the greatest of all the laws of nature that the Lord must keep his promises and hear his people's prayers. Gravitation and other laws may be suspended, but this cannot be. "Oh," says one, "I cannot believe that." No, and so your prayers are not heard. You must have faith, for if faith be absent you lack the very backbone and soul of prayer. Oh, for mighty faith! If we once behold a church filled with real active faith, exercised in believing prayer to the living God, the God of Israel, we shall see the churches multiplied with men as with a flock.

III. We are now to seek comfort for you who do not come to prayer-meetings, or otherwise wrestle in prayer. ON WHAT GROUND CAN ANYBODY BE EXCUSED FROM THE DUTY OF PRAYER? Answer: On no ground whatever. You cannot be excused on the ground of *common humanity*; for if it be so that God will save sinners in answer to prayer, and I do not pray, what am I? Souls dying, perishing, sinking to hell, while the ordained machinery for salvation is prayer, and the preaching of the word; and if I restrain prayer, what am I? Surely the milk of human kindness has been drained from my breast, and I have ceased to be human, and if so, it is idle to talk of communion with the divine. He who has no pity on a wounded man, and would not seek to relieve the hunger of one expiring of want, is a monster: but he who has no pity on souls who are sinking into everlasting fire, what is he? Let him answer for himself.

Next, can any excuse be found in *Christianity* for neglect of prayer. I answer, there is none to be found in Christianity any more than in humanity, for if Christ has saved us, he has given us of his Spirit; "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And what was the Spirit of Christ? Did he look upon Jerusalem and say, "I believe that the city is given up, predestinated to be destroyed," and then coolly go on his way? No, not he. He believed in predestination, but that truth never chilled his heart. He wept over Jerusalem, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

"Did Christ o'er sinners weep,
And shall our cheeks be dry?"

Shall there be no prayer in our hearts, when God has appointed prayer to be the channel of blessing to sinners as well as to ourselves? Then how can we say that we are Christians? In God's name, how can we make a profession of Christianity if our hearts do not ascend in mighty prayer to God for a blessing on the sons of men?

But perhaps an excuse is found in the fact that the Christian man does not feel that his prayer is of very much consequence, for his heart is in a barren state. Ah, well, this is no excuse, but an aggravation of the sin. My dear brother, if you feel you cannot pray, you are the man who ought to pray twice as much as anybody else. Whenever your mind falls into a condition in which it is indisposed for prayer, that condition should serve as a danger signal; something is very much amiss. At such a time there should be a double calling upon God that the Spirit of prayer may be vouchsafed.

I do charge you, professing Christians, not to restrain prayer to God for a blessing, for, if you do, you hurt all the rest of the brotherhood. Get a bit of dead bone into your body and it harns first the member in which it is placed and subsequently the whole body. From head to foot the whole system is the worse because of the fragment of dead matter which is present in the body. So if there is a prayerless professor among us, he is an injury to the entire company. Some of you are the baggage of the army, and hinder its marches and its fighting. We have a great army here, and if you were all able-bodied men, and would march on to the fight, we should see great victories; but we have to carry our diseased ones in ambulances, and half the time of the pastor and church officers has to be taken up in looking after the inefficient soldiers, who are fit only for the hospital. "Who do you mean?" says one. You my friend—very likely, you. Your own conscience shall decide to whom it refers.

Now, surely we ought to be much in prayer, because after all we owe a great deal to prayer. Those who were in Christ before me prayed for me: should I not pray for others? By a mother's prayers some of you when you were girls were brought to Christ; will you not pay back the debt to your mother by praying for your own children? By a father's prayers, young man, you were brought to the Saviour's feet; now pray for those who are younger than yourself that they may be brought to Jesus too. The treasury of the church's prayers has been expended

upon us in bringing us to Christ's feet, let us now contribute to the common stock, casting in our prayers for the conversion of others. Common gratitude demands that we attend to this.

I am afraid I shall have also to plead that I must suspect your soundness in the faith, brethren, if you do not join in prayer. I know some who, if they are anything at all, are sound in the faith. This is their beginning and their ending. I used to know years ago a few people who were sound all over, and never cared whether souls were saved or not because they were so sound. That kind of soundness is empty sound, from which may the Lord deliver us. Correct opinions are a poor apology for heartlessness towards our fellow men. If we are orthodox, we believe that regeneration is the work of the Spirit of God. Then, dear friend, the natural inference is that those of us who are regenerated, should pray the Holy Spirit to regenerate others. If it be entirely his work, and we cannot depend upon the preacher at all, we must invoke the power divine. If you do not thus call in divine energy, where is your soundness? I am sure that you desire to see souls saved; but if it be the Spirit's work, and you do not pray the Spirit to do that work, surely you do not believe your own doctrine. By your soundness in the faith, therefore, I would plead with you that you increase your earnestness in prayer.

You may say, "Well, I think I may be excused," but I must reply you cannot. "*I am very sick,*" says one. Ah, then you can lie in bed and pray. None of us can fully estimate the blessings which have come down on this Tabernacle in answer to the pleadings of our friends who are constant invalids. I believe the Lord sets apart a certain section of the church to keep up prayer through the night-watches: and when you and I who are healthy are sound asleep the watchers do not slumber, or keep silence, but either in praise or prayer they make the hours holy with their devout exercises. I consider that I sustain great losses when dear Christian men and women who have for years, sustained me by their prayers are taken home to glory. Who will fill the gaps?

"*I am so poor,*" says one. Well, you are not called upon to pay a shilling every time you pray to God. It does not matter how poor you are, your prayers are just as acceptable; only, remember, if you are so poor, you ought to pray all the more, because you cannot give your offering in the shape of gold. I should like you to say with the apostle, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee. My Master, I will be much in prayer."

"Ah," says another, "but *I have no talent.*" That is another reason why you should pray more, and not why you should be prayerless, because if you cannot contribute to the church's public service from lack of talent, you should the more zealously contribute to her strength by the private exercise of prayer and intercession, and thus make those strong who are better fitted to go to the front.

"Ah," says one, "but *I am just converted*; I have hardly obtained peace myself: how can I pray?" If you want an answer to that question read the fifty-first psalm. David begins, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies," and so on, but he does not continue long before he cries, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem." He

has hardly been washed himself from sin before he begins to pray to be useful—"Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." You new converts are the very people to pray with power. So from my inmost soul, as if I were pleading for my life (and it lies nearer my health and continued life than some may imagine) I beg you to enquire of the Lord. In thus doing I am pleading for this church's long prosperity, I am pleading for the good of London, I am pleading for the benefit of the whole world. If you love the Lord Jesus, brethren and sisters, do enquire at the hands of the Lord concerning this great promise of an increase to the church; prove him now, and see if he does not pour you out a blessing, yea, if he does not increase you with men as with a flock, as the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem on her solemn feast days. God grant his blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Ezekiel xxxvi. 1—14; 24—38.

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THE SECRET OF A HAPPY LIFE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 16TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."—Psalm xvi. 8.

IN the preceding verses we read, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." The speaker therefore is a very contented and happy man. It is not the most usual thing in the world to find persons extolling their lot, and manifesting a conspicuous emphasis of satisfaction; far more common is it to hear men surrounded with favours lamenting the hardness of their case. Contented minds are almost as scarce as snow-flakes in harvest. The man who rejoices in his goodly heritage deserves attention, and we shall do well to learn his secret. How is it that he is able to feel so happy? Let us seek out the way by which he arrived at this peace, and discover the silken clue which led him into such a bower of delight. Perhaps his road may fit our feet, and by following it we may become as perfectly content as he was. O Lord and giver of peace, help us in the search!

But, first, who is this person who is thus singularly content? To our astonishment we find that the Spirit speaketh here by prophecy in the name and person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is he who by the Spirit here saith, "The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage"! He was the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," he was "despised and rejected of men," he had not where to lay his head, he was often subject to hunger and thirst; he had few friends, and those proved faithless in the time of his extremity: how could he speak thus? All this is so much the more encouraging for us, because if this most sorrowful of men was nevertheless able to feel an inward calm, a sweet content, then it must be possible for us to do so whose lot is not so bitter. We are not sent to make atonement for sin, and hence our sorrows are few compared with our Lord's. There was a special reason for his being distressed, for he took our griefs and carried our sorrows; but no atoning griefs are demanded

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of us, nor have we afflictions to bear from the hand of God as punishments for sin, for the Lord has laid all these upon him, and we are clear. If the Lord Jesus, the man of grief, a mourner all his days, yet said the lines had fallen unto him in pleasant places, and he had a goodly heritage, it must be the more possible for us to rise to the like content, if we follow his rule and live according to his example. What, then, is the secret of perfect peace and happiness here below? The price thereof is above rubies: where shall this art be learned? The magic lamps and wonderful rings of which children read in fairy stories are as nothing in value compared with this true philosopher's stone, this mystic secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear him, by which his saints are enabled to enjoy the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, which keeps their hearts and minds by Jesus Christ. O Prince of Peace, grant us this rest!

Our text clearly imparts to us the secret of the greatest happiness to be found below the skies, and, indeed, it reveals the hidden source of those pleasures above, which are at God's right hand for evermore. The first part of the excellent method lies in *living in the Lord's presence always*,—"I have set the Lord always before me;" the second is found in *trusting in the Lord's presence always*—"Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

I. The secret, then, of peace, is first **LIVING IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE ALWAYS** :—"I have set the Lord always before me." We shall try, in order to understand what this means, to keep our eyes upon the life of Jesus, and at the same time apply the text to the saints; because though this passage is pre-eminently fulfilled in him, yet since the members partake of the nature of the head, each one in his degree, that which Jesus did and thereby obtained a holy joy and rest, is to be fulfilled in us that we may enter into the joy of our Lord. Does not our Lord Jesus bid us take his yoke upon us and learn of him, that so we may find rest unto our souls?

I take it that our text means first, that *we should make the Lord's presence the greatest of all facts to us*. Of all things that are God chiefly is, and we should regard him in that light. It was so with our Lord Jesus Christ. He, as a man, was cognisant of the existence of all the things that are seen, but even more did he recognise the existence of God, who cannot be seen,—that great Spirit who is alike invisible and incomprehensible. How vividly the presence of God must have been realised by Christ at all times, for he was in the Father and the Father in him. You and I have never seen and understood the Father in the same degree as he did, though the Son has revealed him to us. He entered into a fuller and more constant recognition of God's presence in all places and things, than we as yet have done. Yet truly we have seen the Father, for we have seen Jesus by faith. We have mounted up on wings as eagles, and with the eagle eye have looked the sun in the face, and have not been blinded. Is it not written, "The pure in heart shall see God"? We have been taught to see God around us in all things that exist, and in all events that happen; and we bless the Lord that we live not as those who are "without God in the world," but we are taught by the Spirit to recognise our Father's loving, all-pervading presence: yet I trow we do not discern

it so constantly, clearly, and impressively as our Lord Jesus did. He looked upon the mountains, and the sunlight on their brows was the smile of his Father. He saw the plains, and their harvests were his Father's bounty. To him the waves of the sea were tossed in tempest by his Father's breath, or calmed by his Father's whisper. He fed the multitude, but it was with his Father's bread; and he healed the sick, but the Father did the works. In all things about him he continually and distinctly recognised the active presence of the Most High. Other men remarked that the ravens were fed, but he said, "Your heavenly Father feedeth them." Other men noticed that the lilies were fair to look upon, but he discerned that "God so clothes the grass of the field." The heavenly Father was in every place, and in every thing to Jesus. Now, I pray our Lord to grant that by the blessed Spirit we may always be sensitive of the presence of God wherever we are. Is it not a sad proof of the alienation of our nature that though God is everywhere we have to school ourselves to perceive him anywhere? His are the beauties of nature, his the sunshine which is bringing on the harvest, his the waving grain which cheers the husbandman, his the perfume which loads the air from multitudes of flowers, his the insects which glitter around us like living gems; and yet the Creator and Sustainer of all these is far too little perceived. Everything in the temple of nature speaks of his glory, but our ears are dull of hearing. Everything, from the dewdrop to the ocean, reflects the Deity, and yet we largely fail to see the eternal brightness. I beseech you, my brethren, to pray that you may have this text wrought into your very souls: "I have set the Lord always before me." Refuse to see anything without seeing God in it. Regard the creatures as the mirror of the great Creator. Do not imagine that you have understood his works till you have felt the presence of the great worker himself. Do not reckon that you know anything till you know that of God which lies within it, for that is the kernel which it contains. Wake in the morning and recognise God in your chamber, for his goodness has drawn back the curtain of the night and taken from your eyelids the seal of sleep: put on your garments and perceive the divine care which provides you with raiment from the herb of the field and the sheep of the fold. Go to the breakfast room and bless the God whose bounty has again provided for you a table in the wilderness: go out to business and feel God with you in all the engagements of the day: perpetually remember that you are dwelling in his house when you are toiling for your bread or engaged in merchandise. At length, after a well-spent day, go back to your family and see the Lord in each one of the members of it; own his goodness in preserving life and health; look for his presence at the family altar, making the house to be a very palace wherein king's children dwell. At last, fall asleep at night as in the embraces of your God or on your Saviour's breast. This is happy living. The worldling forgets God, the sinner dishonours him, the atheist denies him, but the Christian lives in him. "In him we live and move and have our being; we are also his offspring." Visible things we look upon as shadows; the things which we touch and taste and handle perish in the using; the elements of this solid earth shall dissolve with fervent heat, but the ever-present God whom we cannot see is the same, and of his years there

is no end, and his existence is the only real and true and eternal one to us. He has been our dwelling-place in all generations, and it were evil indeed not to know our own eternal home. This is a main ingredient in the oil of joy,—to realise always that the Lord is round about us “as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, from henceforth even for evermore.”

Secondly, the words of the text signify *the making of God's glory the one object of our lives*. As a prize is set before the runners in a race so the believer's heart sets God's glory before it as the prize for which the race of life is run. It was even so with our dear Redeemer; from the first to the last he set the Lord always before him as the object of his life on earth. Do you ever find in him a selfish motive? Is he ever moved by any grovelling ambition? Is he not always seeking the good of men and by that means the glory of God. While yet a youth he goes up to the temple, not to display his precocity, nor like other children to gratify himself with the admiration heaped upon him for his early wisdom, but he says, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” In after days, when he has been anointed to his work, he sits by a well and takes his rest; a woman comes and converses with him, but he speaks upon no idle theme; he talks to her of the living water, seeks her soul to save it, and then tells his disciples that he has meat to eat that they know not of; for it was his meat and his drink to do the will of him that sent him.

He presses forward with changeless intensity of purpose towards the completion of the work which the Father had committed to him. You see him present at a wedding, or meeting a funeral procession, but he is found in both cases alike aiming at God's glory. If you find him battling with the crowd, or in the chamber shut in with two or three raising the dead, if you read of his prayers upon the lone mountain-side, or listen to his groans in the garden of Gethsemane, still, evermore—this one thing he does: he glorifies his Father on the earth. Despising shame and trampling under foot the world's honour, he lives to God and to God alone. Not sometimes and now and then, or as the general aggregate of his life, is he found setting God before him, but *always* and without exception. In every thought, in every word, in every deed, God was before him, and for God he lived. Oh, that we could reach to this,—whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we would do all to the glory of God. Oh, that we never dared to do what would dishonour the name of God! Oh, that we walked in all things so as to please him who loved us and gave himself for us! I am sure, dear brothers and sisters, if you have aimed at this, though you may have fallen far short of your desire, yet in such a path you have found peace unto your souls. This is the king's highway, the way of holiness wherein no lion shall be found. To know that God is present, and to live wholly to please him, this is the way of pleasantness; take care that ye keep therein. Never do anything which would dishonour the holy name wherewith you are called, and leave nothing undone however hard to the flesh which would serve the cause of God, so shall you be like your Lord, and become partakers of his peace. This is the mode of life by which a man shall have foretastes of the feasts of heaven while yet in this wilderness world: may the Holy Ghost lead us into it.

A further meaning of setting the Lord always before us is *so to live that the presence of God shall be the rule and support of our obedience*. So Jesus did. You know right well that to many servants the master's eye is most important in order to make them careful and industrious. How many are eye-servers, and men pleasers. Take away the master's eye, and how slowly the labour drags along; how often is it slurred over in a slovenly manner, or left undone altogether. The old proverb declares that the master's eye does more than both his hands, and it is too sadly true; yet it is not wrong to say that their Master's eye ought to have a great influence over the servants of God. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God." Beloved, how would you live if God were seen, looking on? He is looking on! So live. Suppose that in some action of to-morrow you were specially warned,—"The Lord will carefully observe you, the Omniscient will fix all his thoughts upon you, and detect your motives and scan your spirit, as well as weigh the deed itself." If you had such a revelation, how would you act? Should you act at all times, for it is always true. "Thou God seest me" is an exclamation for every moment of day and night. Can you put your finger upon any part of Christ's life and say "He forgot that the Father beheld him in this act"? Is not the whole of Christ's life such a picture that God himself looked at every line and tint of it with infinite admiration? Have you not yourself traversed the gallery of the Saviour's life, and pausing at each picture and scene, been filled with amazement and led to exclaim, "He hath done all things well." When your mind has been most devout and most holy, have you not more than ever admired every little trait in your Saviour's character, every separate feature of every action of his life, whether public or private. The Father was always with him, and he did always those things which pleased him. Oh, beloved, would to God that your obedience were in like manner measured out under the profound consciousness that the great God is watching you in all that you do! He has beset you behind and before, and laid his hand upon you. If you take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, he is there; even darkness hideth not from him. Everything that you have done has been enacted in the presence of your heavenly Father; have you felt this? Ah, when you dishonoured the Lord Jesus he was himself looking on: he to whom belong those pierced hands heard your coward words and saw your traitorous acts, and gazed in wondering sorrow at you, his friend, thus betraying him. When you mingled with the ungodly world and was as one of them, he too was there, and now he shows you his wounds, and sorrowfully exclaims, "These are the wounds which I received in your house, the house of my friend." The blows of friends smite in a tender place, their woundings are the cruellest that can be received, for enemies pierce sharply, but friends stab with poisoned daggers. When *we* bring dishonour upon him whom we profess to love, it is dishonour indeed. Oh, how much would be left undone, and on the other hand how much more of another kind would be diligently executed, if in every deed we set the Lord always before us.

Not yet, however, have we completely expounded our text. The words

must mean also that we are to set the Lord before us *as the source from which we are to derive solace and comfort under every trial*. Jesus could say, "I have set the Lord always before me"; for this it was that made him suffer poverty and never complain; this it was that made him encounter shame and spitting and yet remain dumb with wondrous patience, like a sheep before her shearers. You never hear our Lord cry out until his Father's face is hidden from him; then indeed he cries, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" When, because of his standing as our surety, God himself withdrew the manifestation of his favour, then his pangs were bitter and his grief was overflowing, but you and I will never have to bear the like. God forsook him that he might never forsake us. You shall always find the Lord near in the day of trouble, and therefore if ever you have a Gethsemane, and the bitter cup cannot be passed from you except you drink it, you shall set the Lord before you, and in that cheering presence you shall be able to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," and patiently drink your appointed cup even to the dregs. Are you saying to-day, "How much I wish that I had more of the comforts of life, but my means are sadly scant, and I am very sick and very heavy in spirit"? Your Saviour was tempted in all points like as you are, but he set the Lord always before him, and therefore he was content and said, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Let all else go, my brother, for if God be with you, you will still be upheld. Let friends die one after another, and let earthly comforts fade like autumn leaves, but if you set the Lord always before you there is such a fullness of joy in every attribute of God, there is such a heaven in every glimpse of Jesus' face, there is such overwhelming bliss in every drop of Jehovah's everlasting love, that you shall not fail nor be discouraged, but you shall sing his praises even in the fiercest fires. To you he will say, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God. When thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee, the floods shall not overflow thee. When thou goest through the fires thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." The presence of God makes even death delightful, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." Thus you see that setting the Lord always before us ensures us never ceasing consolation.

Yet, further, these words mean that *we are to hold perpetual communion with God*. When Jesus said "I have set the Lord always before me," he meant that he was always in fellowship with the Father. Very frequently the fellowship was exercised in prayer, for our Lord, though he is described as praying very much, no doubt prayed infinitely more than any evangelist has recorded, for he was praying when no one knew it but himself and his God, when even his lips did not move. His public prayer, or the prayer which could be observed by others, was made manifest for our sakes and their sakes who stood with him, but it was only a cropping up upon the surface of the great rock of prayer which laid the foundation of his holy living. Right well did he say, when at the grave of Lazarus, "And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it." He was always in converse with the Father, who was indeed the only one upon whom he

could cast himself. What consolation could he gather from Peter and James and John? He was like a father with a number of little children around him, who could not so much as understand their father's troubles, much less support him under them. As our Lord was always in sacred fellowship with God, he had great sorrow from beholding the sin of mankind, knowing as he did how grievous it was to God. He would mourn before his Father the people's sin, and continue still to intercede, praying all his life as he prayed at last, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thus was he at all times in deepest sympathy with the God of love.

I doubt not that our Lord often spoke with the Father in the form of praise, for while on one occasion only it is recorded that he rejoiced, yet doubtless he rejoiced evermore in God. How could his pure nature do otherwise than joy in the Lord? His whole heart and soul and mind ran in one line with the mind of God. I am of course now speaking of him as man, and as man his heart was in perfect harmony with the heart of God—there was nothing in him contrary to the will and design of the Father, but his whole human nature was carried along in a parallel course with the mind of the Most High, and hence it was that he was always at peace.

Oh, brothers and sisters, may God grant us grace to commune constantly with himself. Prayer should not be a matter of mornings and evenings alone, but all the day our spirit should commune with God. Father, thou art so near us, and yet how slow we are to speak to thee. Teach us, thy children, to be always talking with thee, so that while we walk on earth our conversation may be in heaven. The Lord give us to hold holy commerce with heaven, hearing what God the Lord will speak, and speaking to him in return. Be it ours to hear the words of the inspired book, and to regard the monitions of the gracious Spirit, and then may our spirit in its turn speak with God, and make known its requests unto him. I hope you will be reaching out towards this by the divine anointing of the Holy Spirit. For this is the grand secret, the sure foundation of a happy life. Perpetual communion with God is the highest state of joy which can be known on earth. Learn to say truthfully, "I have set the Lord always before me," and you have the Lord's secret.

Once again upon this point, dear friends. If we are to be happy, *we must follow this life of nearness to God because of our delight in it, and from the joy which we feel in it.* Indeed, such a life cannot be lived in any other manner. Mere duty and law cannot operate here. If any man shall say "What a dreary affair this communion with God must be! How dull must be this walking continually with God!" then I reply, your speech bewrayeth you, you have not the first essentials of such a life, neither can you so much as guess what it means. Indeed, I am not talking to you at all, it would be useless to press such a theme upon you. Excuse me, you know nothing of the spiritual life, nothing of what it is to be a child of God, or else communion would not be despised by you. You must be born again, and till you are born again such exhortations as those which I am now giving will not apply to you at all. Does some mere professor sneeringly enquire, "What, are we always to live to God's glory, and are we to do nothing but what would glorify

him? This is laying down very straight rules, and making the road to heaven very narrow indeed." Do you think so, friend? Then I will tell you plainly my solemn suspicion about you,—I am persuaded that you do not know the Lord, for if you did the way of holiness would be your delight, and you would not ask for license to sin. I can understand your sinning, but I cannot understand your finding pleasure in it if you are a real Christian. The pleasures of the world are to a true believer as the husks which the swine do eat; and if you find them to be good bread for your soul then assuredly you are none of his: the hogs may be satisfied with hogs' meat, for providence meant it for them, but the child of God, even when he is a prodigal, cannot be satisfied so; he would fain fill his belly with the husks, but it is impossible that he should thus be satisfied. I am sure if you are the Lord's you will look upon living near to God, and delighting in him, not as being a severe task, or a weariness, but as a luxury, and a delightful privilege, after which your soul hungers and thirsts. You will say with David, "My soul panteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" To you the choicest place is that which is nearest to your Lord, though it may be in the dust of contempt, or in the furnace of affliction. It is your ambition to be subdued by the Lord Jesus unto himself most completely, and then to be henceforth the place of his abode, the instrument for his use, and, best of all, the object of his love. I would dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, as a child at home, considering the present world to be a lower room of that house, and heaven above as the upper story of the selfsame abode. The presence of God is our bliss.

Now, is there anything about our Lord's life which looks like being under restraint, or being compelled to act otherwise than he would have wished? Can you suspect in his whole career that he was at any time acting against his inclination? Was his life constrained and unnatural? Did he walk like a man in irons? Did he live as one pressed into the army of the righteous, denied pleasures which would have been his choice, and forced to forms of piety which were distasteful to him? Not at all. Christ is a free man, living out his inmost self, following his heart's best desires. You can see that wherever he is he acts according to his nature, and is as free in what he does as the fish are free in the sea, or the birds in the air. Now, such is the Christian in this matter of setting the Lord always before him. He acts not of constraint but willingly, for the Lord has given him a nature which delights in that which God delights in. He does not say, "Woe is me, I am caged like a bird my life is so precise and Puritanic that I am weary of it." "Nay," says he, "if I had these worldly joys, and might indulge in them, there is nothing in them to please me. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Others are saying, 'Who will show us any good?' but my one petition is 'Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me.'" He says, "Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The Christian is never so free as when he is most under law to Christ, he is never so much himself as when he denies himself, and never so delighted as when he delights himself in the Lord, and lives only for the glory of God. Now, if such be the case with you, dear brethren, you have learned the secret of joy.

The text may be read in the Hebrew, "I have set the Lord *equally* before me," that is equally at all times. He speaks of the solitary night watches, and then his reins instructed him, for he was with God. In the morning he exclaims, "When I awake I am still with thee." We are to have the Lord equally before us under all circumstances: in our business pursuits as well as in prayer meetings and hearings of sermons; in seasons of recreation as well as in hours of devotion, in the day of health as well as in the hour of death. If you break the chain of communion by going where you cannot expect to have the Lord's presence, or doing what the Lord cannot sanction, the broken link can be restored, but it will always show the rivets. You may lose your roll like Christian in the arbour, and you may go back again and find it, but it is very hard going back over the same ground, and after going back it is difficult to take to the onward path again. The hardest part of the road to heaven is that which has to be traversed three times: once when you go over it at first, a second time when you have to return with weeping to find your lost evidences, and then again when you have to make up for lost time. Backsliding causes unhappiness, but abiding with God creates peace like a river, flowing on and on in one long-continued stream. Dear friends, here is the method of a blissful life: try it, and the result is certain.

II. I will speak very briefly upon the second head. The second part of the secret follows upon the first,—that is TRUSTING ALWAYS IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE. Here is confidence in God: "because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Here is confidence that God is near us; confidence that God loves us, for he is not only near us, but in the place of friendly fellowship; and confidence that God will practically help us, for the right hand is the dextrous hand, the hand which does the work, and thus God is nigh unto his people with practical assistance, to sustain and to deliver them. How blessed it must be to feel that we have nothing to be afraid of in all the world, for God stands at our right hand to take care of us whatever may happen.

David says, and Christ says through David, "I shall not be moved," that is, first, I shall *not be moved with any regret or remorse as to the past*. Ah, brethren, if we have set the Lord always before us, we can sit down and meditate upon our course of action, and it will bear reflection. The man who knows that he has lived as in the sight of God will not have to wish that he had never been born: on the contrary, he will bless the Lord at all times for all that happens to him. Christ had many sorrows, but no regrets. What a life was his! He never had to look back upon a single act and repent of it. All was done with the Lord before him, and he was not moved. A lady once said to a minister that she was attending the theatre, and she remarked, "There are so many pleasures connected with seeing a play; there is the pleasure of anticipation before you go, there is the pleasure of enjoying it when you are there, and there is the third pleasure of reflecting upon it afterwards." The good man replied, "Ah, madam, there is another pleasure which you have not mentioned, and that is the comfort it will afford you upon a dying bed." The irony was well deserved. I may mention this as being the greatest recommendation of setting the Lord always before you, that it will bear

reflection and yield comfort amid sickness and death. If by divine grace you are able to live a life of unbroken communion with God, constantly having an eye to his presence, you will not have to mourn over a misspent life. Your retrospect will be full of pleasure : as for sin, that is already covered by the blood of Christ, and beside that you will have been kept from a thousand snares by having the fear of God always before your eyes ; and so in reviewing the past you shall not be moved with bitter remorse. Many things which we now do we may have to lament in the future though now we think we are acting very wisely and well, but if the Lord is always before us, our steps will be established, because they are ordered by the Lord. Even if you make a mistake as to policy, you will be comforted by the knowledge that it was a fault of your judgment, and not of your heart, if indeed you desired alone to serve the Lord.

Beloved, it is well for us *to live near to God, that we may not be moved from our consistency in the way of true religion.* There are many professors whose lives are jerky ; they are walking with God after a fashion to-day, but anon they wander into crooked paths ; then they begin again, but ere long they start aside as a deceitful bow ; like Reuben, they are unstable as water and do not excel. In our Lord's life there is no break, it is one continuous harmony. The unities are observed in his grand career, it is like his garment—without seam and woven from the top throughout. Now, brother, if you set the Lord always before you, you will not be moved, but your path will be like that of the sun in the heavens, rising from dawn till noon.

Setting the Lord before us prevents our being *moved with terror.* It is said of the believer, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." The believer is not moved with staggering fear. A great trouble is coming upon him, but he has set the Lord before him, and he is not cast down. If like Jesus himself he is for the moment swayed with exceeding great sorrow, yet doth he say, "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee," and when he prays he is heard in that he feared.

Such a man is not *moved by temptation so as to be swept into surprising sin.* If I set the Lord always before me I shall not be carried away by a sudden temptation. It is when you are off your guard that sin comes, and you fall. You speak unadvisedly, you get into a hot temper, you make sad havoc of your Christian life, and all because your eye was off your Lord. If you could but have known that the trial was coming, you would have been protected against it ; and if you had set the Lord always before you, you would have been prepared for the world, the flesh, and the devil, and shielded from every fiery dart of the wicked one. Let us dwell in God, and he will be a wall of fire round about us. He will keep us every moment, lest any hurt us : he will keep us night and day.

Thus you will not be *moved so as to fall into failure at last.* You must all have felt the dread lest after all at the end of life it should turn out that you are not saved. Have you not feared that you have deceived yourselves, and were not converted when you thought you were ? What if it should turn out to be so ? What will you do when the bubble of false hope shall burst ? Ah, but if you set the Lord always before you,

you shall not be moved with that fear, for you will know that your Redeemer liveth; you will have such a consciousness of the divine presence that you will commit your departing spirit unto God as to a faithful Creator. You will not be afraid to die, for as Jesus said, "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," so will you say, "My flesh also shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, and though I see corruption as to my body, yet shall I be raised in incorruption in the likeness of my Lord, for I know that my next of kin liveth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall behold for myself, and not another." Oh, the joy of thus abiding in God and trusting in his present power,—having the Lord at your right hand, and then abiding in calm assurance that you cannot be moved.

Just four things, and I have done. First, to any of you who are unhappy. Some of you are not Christian people, but altogether of the world. You are not happy, and yet I dare say you have a great many things to make you so. You are placed in easy circumstances, where you can enjoy *yourselves* as much as you like. The sorriest thing in the world to enjoy is yourself. I can enjoy other people better than I can myself: to enjoy yourself needs a very depraved appetite, for selfishness is sordid, and, like the serpent, has dust appointed to be its meat. If you think that you will find pleasure in worldliness, I should like you to recollect one who tried that method very thoroughly, I mean Solomon of old, who had all the wealth a heart could wish, and all the wisdom a brain could hold, and yet was both poor and foolish. He ransacked the world for joy, but found it not. At one time he gave all his thoughts to architecture, and built splendid palaces, and after he had built them all he said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He took to his books and studied very hard, but after he had pored over them long he said, "Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh." He tried singing men and singing women, and the peculiar delights of kings, but when he had enjoyed himself in this manner to the utmost possibilities of human nature, he said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He planted gardens, and laid out water courses, and practised engineering; he inclined at one time to the pleasures of a fool, and anon he was eager in the nobler pursuits of a wise man; sometimes he was sober with science, and at other seasons he was excited with laughter,—he tried everything, and found all earthly joy to be as deceitful as the apples of Sodom which are fair to look upon but turn to ashes in the hand. Nothing beneath the skies, and nothing above the skies, can make any man happy apart from God, search as you will. Apart from God you may make a hell, but you cannot make a heaven, do what you please. Oh, I beseech you, unhappy man, if you have grown weary of the world and are sick of everything, if you are in the sere and yellow leaf though not forty years of age, remember that there is a place where your leaf can be made green. If thou wilt set the Lord always before thee, thou shalt find peace in him.

And, next, I may be addressing some who think themselves perfectly happy in the world. I confess I do not envy you, but still I like to

hear you sing your song, and tell the tale of what bliss the world affords. Yet note on what frail pillars this fairy palace of yours is erected! You are healthy, that is at the bottom of it—your bodily frame is in good order, and you are merry. But suppose you should fall sick? Or suppose those few grey hairs should, ere long, be multiplied, where would be your mirth? Or if your wealth should take to itself wings and fly away, what then? Or if you come before the Lord in judgment, what then? Oh, sir, let this frail foundation go; it is not meet to rest your eternal hopes upon. You are like a little child building his little sand house by the seaside: the tide is coming up; O child, leave your sand and flee from the waves! There is a rock on which you may build with massive stones a house eternal, a palace of happiness that never shall be dissolved. Go get you there!

Now, you Christian people, if any of you are unhappy, I wish I could preach you out of it by reminding you of this text, but, as I cannot, I leave you in the hands of the Holy Spirit. If you draw near to God you will be as happy as the days are long in midsummer, your doubts and fears will flee, and you will be as merry as birds of the air.

And you happy Christians, you of the bright eye and the elastic footstep, you can be happier still by coming yet nearer to God, and abiding in fuller communion with him; and though already you are singing,

“How happy is the pilgrim’s lot,”

you shall be yet more blessed if you become more obedient, more submissive to the divine will, more in sympathy with Jesus, and more abidingly in communion with the Father. This is heaven below: God grant it you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xvi.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—16, 708.

“THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL.” Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 23RD, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."—Isaiah liv. 7—10.

THIS precious passage is the property of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We might not have ventured to say this if it were not for the last verse of the chapter, which assures us that it is so. "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." The matchless promises and assurances of this chapter do not belong to the Jewish church alone, nor only to the Gentile church, nor even exclusively to the whole church considered as a community, but they are the property of all who are sons and servants of the living God. Isaiah speaks of both sonship and service. "This is the heritage," or portion obtained by heirship; which implies sonship. The promise, then, is ours, if we have been born into the family of grace. But then all God's sons are also servants, even as the firstborn among many brethren became a servant of servants for our sakes. Judge yourselves, dear friends, as to whether you are sons of God by birth and servants of God by choice, for if you be, then may you take these promises to yourselves. In the last clause it is written, "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." In this we can claim our part, for we have no righteousness of our own, but it has pleased the Lord to work a righteousness *for* us, and a righteousness *in* us; since we stood in great need of both of these, neither could we by any means have procured them for ourselves. If the Lord Jesus had not been made unto us both our justification and our sanctification, we could have had no hope of seeing the face of God with acceptance. If we are sons by

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regeneration, and servants by the renewal of our nature, and if our righteousness both imputed and imparted is found in God alone, then the text is ours most richly to enjoy. Stand not back from a table so richly spread, but eat and drink abundantly of its dainty provisions. If this be our heritage, the Lord says to us as he did to Abraham, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it."

Before going further I would call your attention to the position of the wonderful chapter now before us. It may seem to be a commonplace remark, but its position is remarkable as following the fifty-third of Isaiah—that clearest of all prophecies concerning our Lord. The fifty-third of Isaiah is the lay of the great minstrel prophet concerning the sufferings of the despised and rejected of men, and it is followed by this golden chapter. By the way of the atonement we come to enjoy covenant blessings. Fresh from the woes of Calvary we are able to bear our own griefs without repining, and with the great ransom full in view we are convinced of our security before the Lord. You will never have faith enough to comprehend the extent of the heritage prepared of the Lord for you, except as your eyes are strengthened by gazing upon him whom it pleased the Father to bruise for us. When we have the fullest sense of the sufferings of Jesus and of the love which brought him to bear the iniquities of his people, we are then in the fittest state to comprehend the wonders of covenant grace, and to appreciate the priceless mercies which come to us by the way of his substitutionary sacrifice. Carrying in your hearts such words as these, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, and he was bruised for our iniquities," let us draw near to the treasures which are spread before us. May the Holy Ghost assist us.

The people of God are often very severely afflicted. They are tried in providence, and they are vexed by the wicked among whom they dwell, and at times it seems as if their lot were far less desirable than that of the ungodly. The best of saints have been tempted to envy the worst of sinners when they have seen them in great power, spreading themselves as a green bay tree, while they themselves have been as withered plants. The saints are chastened and the sinners are enriched: this is no small trial of faith. What is worse, at times the children of God are the subjects of great spiritual griefs, and derive no comfort from their religion. They judge themselves to be deserted by their God, and they enquire within themselves, "Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Will he be favourable no more?" Then the joy of their heart ceases, and their music is turned into mourning. At such times there is powerful comfort for the child of God in the fact that, whatever the Lord may do with him, he cannot be wroth with him, nor rebuke him in the weightiest sense, of those words. Since Jesus has made complete atonement on our behalf there may be much that is bitter in our cup, but there cannot be in it even a single drop of *judicial punishment for sin*, because Christ has borne all that justice could inflict. It would be inconsistent with the integrity of the Most High first to execute vengeance upon the surety, and then to call his people to account

for the sin which that surety has put away. There is not therefore in all the chastisements which God lays upon us so much as a single trace of punitive wrath.

“Death and the curse were in our cup :
 O Christ, 'twas full for thee !
 But thou hast drained the last dark drop,
 'Tis empty now for me :
 That bitter cup, love drank it up,
 Now blessing's draught for me.”

The punishment for sin has been executed once for all upon Jesus Christ our Saviour, and now if ever there be wrath on God's part towards his people it is of quite another kind from that with which he visits the unbelieving world. Towards the ungodly he is a Judge, and he summons them to judgment, and executes his righteous sentences upon them ; but we who are in Christ have virtually died in him, and upon us justice has executed its sentence in the person of our great Substitute, and therefore the law cannot make any further demands upon us. We are henceforth the children of God, and have come under another discipline altogether, the discipline of a loving father towards his family. The Lord may be angry with us as a father is angry with his child, but never as a judge is wroth with a criminal. In that respect his anger is for ever turned away from the redeemed.

Our subject is to be *God's little wrath* and *God's great wrath* ; the little wrath may light upon the Lord's beloved, for he says, “In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment” ; but there is a great wrath which burns as a consuming fire, and this cannot fall upon the redeemed, for the Lord has sworn that he will not be wroth with them nor rebuke them.

I. The first subject, then, is what the Lord calls his “LITTLE WRATH.” Let us speak of it and its modifications : and perhaps the Holy Spirit will bless our meditation to the comfort of his afflicted.

Our first remark shall be that *our view of that wrath, and God's view of it may very greatly differ*. To a child of God in a right state even the most modified form of divine anger is very painful. A loving child dreads the smallest displeasure on his father's part. He may be right well assured that his parent will not kill him, or disown him, or deliver him over to the magistrate to be put in prison, but it is sorrow enough for him that his father's heart is grieved. The terrors of a slave are not needed to keep the children of God in order ; the filial fear which trembles at a father's frown is quite sufficient ; let God but hide his face and we are troubled. We do not, therefore, despise the chastening of the Lord, or think little of his fatherly anger ; on the contrary, we are weary with crying, our eyes fail while we wait for our God. Our entreaty is, “Hide not thy face from thy servant ; for I am in trouble : hear me speedily.” It breaks our hearts to think that we should grieve our God. This pain of heart is a very proper feeling, but it may be perverted by unbelief into the occasion of sin. We may conclude from the chastening rod that the Lord is about to destroy us though he has plainly said, “Fury is not in me.” We may falsely conclude, as the text seems to hint, that God has utterly forsaken us, and hidden his

face for ever. When we prayed we enjoyed no liberty and felt no access to the mercy-seat; when we tried to sing, our hosannas fell flat from our tongues; when we went to the assembly of the saints, we no longer beheld the glory of the Lord as we had aforetime seen him in his sanctuary; when we opened the Bible its choicest promises appeared to be as dry bones from which the marrow is taken; therefore we concluded that all was over with us, that God had forsaken us; and we therefore feared that nothing remained for us but eternal destruction.

"If sometimes I strive, as I mourn,
My hold of thy promise to keep,
The billows more fiercely return,
And plunge me again in the deep :
While harass'd and cast from thy sight,
The tempter suggests with a roar,
'The Lord hath forsaken thee quite :
Thy God will be gracious no more.'"

This dark estimate of our affairs is not God's view of them. He knows that he has not utterly or finally withdrawn, but he puts it thus : "For a small moment have I forsaken thee." It is but a partial departure under which the saint is suffering; the small moment will soon be over.

The tried one is enduring only a partial and transient withdrawal of the light of his countenance, for the Lord says, "in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment." I suppose if we were quite new in this world, and had never seen the sun descend below the horizon, we should conclude at his setting that we were about to be plunged into everlasting night. We have now become so accustomed to see him set and rise again, that evening causes us no alarm. Well, child of God, I trust you will not for an instant lose the light of your Father's countenance, but if you should do so it will return again : he has not forsaken you altogether nor for ever. Weeping shall have its night, but joy's bright morning will follow; for the Lord will not cast off for ever, but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. When we are under the hiding of God's face, we cannot judge rightly; we are too agitated, too distressed, too distracted to see matters in their true light. At such times we are in fear where no fear is, and also magnify that which is legitimately a cause of anxiety. Unbelief is so natural to us, and the propensity to write bitter things against ourselves is so very common, that we are not to be trusted with the scales of judgment. Let us not be too positive that our conclusions are the truth; but let us rather take God's estimate of his own dealings, and if we are at this time walking in darkness and seeing no light, let us trust in the Lord and stay ourselves upon his word, for all that God has done towards us, if we are indeed his servants, amounts to this, that for a small moment he has forsaken us, and in a little wrath he has hidden his face from us.

I will now call your attention to two or three things which should greatly modify the view we take of the hidings of God's face. First, *as to time*; the time during which our God withdraws himself is very short : "for a moment," he says; but he puts it less than that, "For a small moment." Do any of you know what a small moment is? Yet that

is the Lord's own expression. Think of how long he has loved us, even from before the foundation of the world ! The time in which he hides his face is very short compared with that. Think of how long he will love us : when all this universe shall have subsided into its native nothingness, he will love us for ever ! The time during which he chastens us is, compared with that, a very small moment. Think of how long we deserved to have been in hell, to lie for ever beneath his indignation : the little moment in which his heavy hand is upon us is indeed as nothing compared with the eternal misery which our sins have merited. Dear brethren, when you come forth from the hiding of his face into the light again, this gloom will seem to have been but a small moment ; you shall forget the shame of your youth, you shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more. Sorrows past are slight and short when followed by boundless, endless joys. An eternity of heaven makes even a lifetime of pain to shrivel into a small moment.

When you have noticed the time, then I would call your attention to *the recompense which is promised*. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." The Lord will make up to you all your losses, your afflictions, your crosses, and your chastisements. God's dealings with us never seem to be so merciful as after a time of trial. Then every blessing is a mercy indeed, and we adore the love which grants it to us. When the taste of the wormwood and the gall is still on the palate, then the wines on the lees well refined have a peculiar flavour, and we drink of them with a special zest. The bitterness makes the sweet the sweeter, and the sorrow makes the joy the more abounding. The text does not say that God will give us mercy after he has for awhile left us, but the word is in the plural, "mercies," multitudes of mercies. Nay, it does not merely say "mercies," but "great mercies," for they are all the greater because we so greatly need them, are plunged in such great distress for want of them, and filled with so many great fears as to our future estate. With great mercies will the Lord come to us, silence our fears, and help us to gather up our scattered hopes and confidences. The Lord not only promises us these great favours, but he promises that he himself will bring them. They are not to be sent to us by angels or by external providences, but he himself declares, "With great mercies *will I* gather thee." The work of restoration shall be the Lord's own personal work : his own right hand shall be laid to it, and after downcastings and scatterings of divers sorts, the Lord himself shall arise for the gathering of his people. "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock." "Thus saith the Lord, as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." The Lord himself will devise means to bring back his banished ones : he will turn away his wrath from them, and they shall sing, "O Lord, I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away and thou comfortest me." It would be far better to walk with God in one long-continued fellowship throughout life, but if fellowship be broken you may return, and return at once. It is a great thing to have your joy continued even under trouble, but if the trouble should be too much for you, and all God's waves and billows should roll over you, yet he will restore you, for he has said, "I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my

people again from the depths of the sea." You shall see how little his wrath was, for love's binding up shall make you forget the wounding, and the heavenly oil of consolation shall effectually remove the bruising. Though the Lord may shut you up in the dark, yet afterwards he will give you light again, and the light will be all the brighter because of the darkness. When comforts are restored we see the reason for their withdrawal, and like good old Jacob when he found his long lost Joseph, we admire the love which afflicted us as much as the grace which restores our comforts. Bear ye, then, with patience the little wrath of God, because of the shortness of its duration and the greatness of its recompense.

The text further declares that *the wrath is in itself little*. I should hardly have used such a term if I had not found it written here by an infallible pen. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment." God's wrath against his own people, as compared with that which burns against the ungodly is but little, and it never can get beyond that point. If you read the context you will see that it must be little wrath, for first it is the wrath of a husband against his wife. "Thy Maker is thy husband." Yes, good Lord, thou mayest be angry with me, but thou art my husband still : thou mayest forsake me for awhile, but thou hast betrothed me unto thyself for ever in faithfulness and in mercy, and in thy word it is written, "The Lord, the God of Israel, saith he hateth putting away." Observe with delight that the Lord's wrath against his chosen is not the anger of a king against rebellious subjects, nor that of an enemy against his foe, but the tender jealousy, the affectionate grief of a loving husband when his bride has treated him ill. Note an instance of this in the book of Jeremiah, where even when he afflicts his people, he shows his love at the same time, and sighs, "I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies." Observe, also, that the wrath is that of a Redeemer against those he has redeemed. We read at the end of the eighth verse "Saith the Lord thy Redeemer." It is such anger that nevertheless he died for us, such anger that still he puts forth his power to win what he has purchased, such anger that he values us far too well to lose us. Is not that a little anger which nevertheless calls to remembrance the blood with which it redeemed the offending one ? O Saviour, Son of God, my Lord, my life, my all, if I cannot see the smiles of thy face, I can still look to the wounds of thy hands ; if I may not be ravished with thy love as it is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, yet I know it as it was shed abroad from thy dear wounded side, when the spear rent thy heart ! Here is consolation to those who are under a cloud ; it is only in a little wrath that a Redeemer can hide himself from the purchase of his agonies. It is, moreover, the anger of One who pities us, for the passage at the end of the tenth verse runs thus "Saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee" ; and in the Hebrew it is, "Saith the Lord thy Pitier." It is the wrath of One who is tender and compassionate, and pities while he smites. It is the anger of a father who takes the rod and scourges the child, but feels more of the smart than the child does, for every twig seems to lacerate his heart while he makes his child to cry and weep. It is such wrath as is consistent with love :—"While I spake against him I do earnestly

remember him still." Our names are graven on the very hand which buffets us, and the rod which bruises us is steeped in mercy.

I have not time to linger where there is so much to detain us, but we will notice next *that the expression of his little anger is not after all so extremely severe*, for what does it say? "I hid my face." The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth, but our text does not say, "I turned my face against thee," but only, "I hid my face from thee." I grant that this is painful, but still there is this sweet reflection—why does he hide his face? It is because the sight of it would be pleasant to us. It is a face of love; for if it were a face of anger he would not need to hide it from his erring child. If it were an angry face, and he wished to chasten us, he would unveil it; and, therefore, we may be sure that he covers it because it is so bright with everlasting love that if it could be seen no chastisement would be felt by us. See, then, that

"Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."

His hidden love is true love, and it hides itself because it is so. Remember that we might have been plunged in outer darkness, and have felt the crushing blows of the iron rod, but as it is we are only put under his frown for a time: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Be it ours to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, but let us not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are corrected of him, for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Let us neither despair nor distrust our God, nor think that we are the objects of his great wrath when, indeed, we are only feeling his fatherly anger, which is only a form of his wise and deep love.

Observe, too, for we must not leave out a word here, that this little wrath *is perfectly consistent with everlasting love*. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee." The Lord is filled with everlasting kindness at the very time when he is making the promise, for if you promise a person that you will love him you do love him already; love alone could prompt a promise such as that which I have read. O thou from whom God has hidden his face, when he promises that he will have mercy on thee with everlasting kindness, is not love already ruling his bosom? Our heavenly Father loves his child as much when he chastens it as when he caresses it. The Lord's own people are as dear to him in the furnace of affliction as on the mount of communion: they are just as precious in his sight when he slays them, and seems in his fierce anger to destroy their joys and wither their hopes, as when he lifts them to his own right hand. The Lord does not rise and fall in his love like the waves of the sea, but his firm affections stand fast like the great mountains, and are stable as the everlasting hills.

You have no right to infer from the greatness of your griefs that God is ceasing to love you, or that he loves you less: on the contrary, I am persuaded that if all the griefs which are possible to men could be heaped upon a child of God, if all God's waves and billows went over him; if he were to descend into the deeps of affliction so low that the earth with

her bars seemed to be about him for ever ; if not one ray of light came into his soul, but he was tormented with temptation, and afflicted by Satan, and deserted by man, and body and soul were alike in grief and pain, yet would all this only be a token of divine love to him and part of the process by which love would supremely bless him. The utmost that can be truthfully said on the dark side of a believer's worst estate is this, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment." O children of God, you ought to be comforted by this, but I know you will not be unless the divine Comforter shall lay these heavenly truths home to your souls. I can but speak them in my own feeble manner ; he can speak them with power. Our duty, then, under the Lord's little wrath is to feel it and grieve about it, and to search ourselves, and put away our sins ; but we must not dishonour the Lord by unbelief, nor fancy ourselves to be under the covenant of works, or speak as if the atonement had failed and left us as much the heirs of wrath as before. We are not under the law, and cannot therefore be under the wrath which the law worketh. We are not accounted as guilty before the Lord, and therefore cannot be obnoxious to his great anger. Let us remember this, and be of good courage when we are enduring the chastisements of the Lord.

II. We are now to consider THE GREAT WRATH OF GOD AND OUR SECURITY AGAINST IT. Our security against it is this : "This is as the waters of Noah unto me : for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth ; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." Until God drowns the whole world again, he never can let out his great wrath against his people. Many centuries have gone by since Noah was saved in the ark, and there has been no other universal flood. There have been partial floods here and there, but the earth has never been completely destroyed with water. I should not wonder but what the first shower of rain that fell after he came out of the ark frightened Noah, and if it had not been that he saw the bow of God in the cloud, he would have trembled lest once again the fair world would be buried in the deeps ; but his fears were all in vain, generations have followed generations in perfect safety from a deluge, and I do not suppose that there is now a man existing who is afraid of a general flood. Now, child of God, you must get rid, once for all, of all fear that God's great wrath can ever be let loose upon you ; for it can never come upon the justified. Be sure of this, that as the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so if thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord will never be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee, so as to destroy thee, or count thee his enemy. His great wrath is over. The flood of old lasted twelve months and more, and during that time there was neither sowing nor reaping, but the Lord has said that never again shall a flood interrupt the operations of nature. "Seed time and harvest," said he, "summer and winter shall not cease : " and they have not ceased. Go abroad now into the fields and see how loaded they are with the fruits of the earth, which are ripening for the sickle. Note, then, that as God has not suffered the seasons to be suspended by another flood, though thousands of years have passed away, so certain is it that he will not suspend your spiritual

life, nor take from you the blessings of his covenant by letting out his wrath against you. He says he will not, and, brother, it were something like blasphemy to indulge a doubt after this.

My text suggests to me that we have ample security that the wrath of God will never break out against us, for *it has broken out against us once*. The waters of Noah did go over the earth once, but never twice. Now, the wrath of God can never break forth against his redeemed, because it has already broken forth against them. Do you not remember it? It was on that dark, that doleful night, when our great covenant Head and Representative was in the garden all alone, and then the flood began to rise and rage, and he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." There was a sight in the garden that night such as none of us have ever seen :—

"Immanuel, sunk with dreadful woe,
Unfelt, unknown to all below—
Except the Son of God—
In agonizing pangs of soul,
Drinks deep of wormwood's bitterest bowl,
And sweats great drops of blood."

The floods lifted up their voice, the cataracts of wrath descended, and the great deeps opened up from beneath to overwhelm his spirit. The waters came in even unto his soul. Ye know what happened to him in Pilate's hall, and among the soldiers, how he hid not his face from shame and spitting while he bowed his back to the smiter's lash; and ye remember well how they took him to the cross and nailed him there, your Lord and mine. "It pleased the Father to bruise him: he hath put him to grief"; he made his soul an offering for sin, and laid on him the iniquities of us all. The Father hid his face from him, and refused to smile on the sinner's Substitute. The tempest had come to its highest, the floods were out twenty cubits above the tops of the mountains when our Lord cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The flood was then at its height, even that flood of wrath which was due to us for sin. In the death of the Lord Jesus we died. We were crucified in him; in him we bore the punishment for sin. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Take it for a stable maxim, which never can be denied, that two judgments can never be meted out for the same offence: neither the laws of earth nor heaven will permit that the Substitute should bleed and then that the penalty should a second time be demanded. Where would be the value of atonement if such could be the case? Jesus has paid our debts, and therefore we are out of debt; he has taken the handwriting of ordinances which was against us, and nailed it to his cross; there is the receipt for all our debts, fastened up before heaven and hell upon the cross of Christ. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." Is not that answer enough for all the charges of hell?

Let us put together two or three texts and drink in their sweetness. "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Get hold of that. Sin is put away for ever. "He

came," another prophet tells us, "to finish transgression, and make an end of sin." Now, if he has made an end of sin, where is it? What reason can we have to fear its return? Think how David puts it: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Does anybody know how far in the broad heavens the east is from the west? In the vastness of space no boundary can be imagined in either direction, and therefore the distance is inconceivable. If the great enemy were to try and bring back our sins, it would take him an eternity to do it in, and meanwhile we shall be safe in heaven. What is said concerning the Lord in the Book of Micah? "He will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Does anybody know how deep the sea is? In some places it is said to be unfathomable. Can we find again that which is cast into the deeps? Our sins are cast by our Lord Jesus into deeps where no line will ever reach them. Glory be to his name for this. Another text flashes upon my memory: "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." Take this again: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." The texts which speak to this effect are many; time would fail us to mention them, but their sum and substance is that Jesus Christ our great covenant surety was made a curse for us, and has thereby redeemed us from the curse of the law. You see, then, my drift. The floods of great wrath have been out, they have rolled over the dear Redeemer's sacred person and spent their fury:

"The tempest's awful voice was heard;
O Christ, it broke on thee!
Thy open bosom was my ward,
It braved the storm for me.
Thy form was scarred, thy visage marred;
Now cloudless peace for me."

It is absolutely certain that there never shall be a second flood either of water to drown the world, or of divine wrath to overwhelm the souls of the redeemed. What joy is this? But this is not all.

Note that *the text gives us next the oath of God as our security*. "As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." It is always a solemn occasion when Jehovah lifts his hand to heaven and swears. Then is a matter confirmed indeed when it is secured by the oath of God. To my mind nothing is more full of awe: I cannot grasp the thought to the full, and yet I love to dwell upon it. He swears by himself because he could swear by no greater, and thus adding his oath to his promise he gives us two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie. He has pledged himself, saying, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." The sin which was buried in Christ's tomb shall never rise again, or be mentioned against us any more for ever; the iniquity which was borne by Christ shall never be laid to the charge of those for whom the Saviour bore it. How could it be? So long as truth and holiness remain, how can it be imagined that atonement can be accepted and yet the sinner punished on his own

account. If God can break his oath, may this thing be, but this is inconceivable, and so we rest secure.

But next we have before us the fact that *the Lord has guaranteed our security by a covenant*, for in the tenth verse he says, "Neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed." The passage should be read, "Neither shall my covenant of peace be removed." The eternal Father has entered into covenant with Christ that he would give to him a seed for whom he should be the Covenant Head and Surety. Christ has fulfilled his side of the covenant by bearing all the penalty for his people's sin, and fulfilling all righteousness, and now that covenant stands fast to be assuredly executed on the Father's side. Thus runs the covenant, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." God hath said, "I will dwell in them and walk in them ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." This is the covenant from which the Lord cannot and will not draw back, for he never alters the thing which has gone forth out of his mouth. This covenant was signed and sealed and ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is in all things well ordered and sure, and therefore the people of God may rest in perfect security of their everlasting deliverance from the deluge of righteous wrath.

And now, to close, *what blessed illustrations of our security are added* in the further declaration of the Lord's mind and will. The Lord looks on the mountains and the hills, and declares that these and all things visible will pass away, for time's grandest birth shall perish when eternity resumes its sway. The mountains and the hills may represent the most stable of earthly hopes and confidences : these all must fail us when most we need them. The Lord himself assures us of this, and therefore does not at all guarantee to us any security in the things which are seen, nor any peace that can be drawn from the creature ; our consolation lies elsewhere. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith Jehovah, the Pitier." Melt, ye mountains, and dissolve, ye hills ; perish, O earth, and flee away ye heavens, but the Lord cannot forget his oath nor forsake his chosen. Should our dearest friends die, should we traverse many times the sorrowful path to the sepulchre, should those who survive become unkind, should our substance be swept away, and our honourable name be unjustly questioned ; should we be driven by persecution into banishment, and should weakness and sickness cast us upon the bed of languishing, should consumption mark us for her own, or painful maladies come upon us as armed men, we should then see the mountains depart and the hills remove ; but even then we would triumph in almighty love, for thus saith the Lord, "My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed." The sick chamber shall be a palace, the sickness itself an angelic messenger, poverty shall make us rich, shame shall increase our honour, banishment shall bring us nearer home, and death itself shall enlarge the bounds of life. Under no conceivable circumstances shall the covenant fail ; the Lord

who made it cannot change, Jesus who sealed it cannot die, the love which dictated it cannot cease, the power which executes it cannot decay, and the truth which guarantees it cannot be questioned. In the eternal provisions of that covenant of peace, which is sure to all the seed, we may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. My brethren, do you believe this? If you do you ought to be as happy as the angels are. Our lot is supremely blessed. What a loving God we serve, and what great things has he spoken concerning us. The soul is filled with wonder that the Almighty God should in very deed enter into covenant engagements with the insects of a day who are crushed before the moth! Whatever may be our outward sorrows, yet when we consider these choice favours and enjoy them in our own souls we may count ourselves of all men the most happy. How can we be so cold, so dead, as we are? Such favours are enough to make rocks and hills sing out. O my soul, arouse thee, and henceforth and evermore pour forth loud hallelujahs unto the Lord.

As for you who have no portion in divine realities, what do you possess that is worth having? O you who are seeking the world, but are despising covenant mercies, it were better for you that you had never been born. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Think upon this, and consider your ways. There is this encouragement for you, that all through our text the leading note is *mercy*. Look at the seventh verse, "With great *mercies* will I gather thee." Look at the eighth verse, "Will I have *mercy* on thee." The word of God drips with mercy. Remember also that if any of us have obtained these covenant promises we were no better than you by nature, and we had no more meritorious right to them than you have; but God in infinite distinguishing grace was pleased to bring *us* into the enjoyment of these privileges: why should he not bring *you* also? If salvation were by merit, there would be no gospel; but as it is of mercy, free mercy, rich mercy, here is good news for you. Dear heart, if thou wouldst be forgiven, Christ is ready to forgive; if thou wouldst have peace with God, that peace is made. If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ thou shalt be saved, even as they are who are this day rejoicing in his complete redemption. The Lord bring thee this day to confess thy sin humbly, to look up to Christ believingly, and to find salvation through the blood of the Lamb. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah liv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—245, 738.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ENOCH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 30TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

"And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."—Genesis v. 21—24.

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."—Hebrews xi. 5, 6.

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."—Jude 14, 15.

THE three passages of Scripture which I have read are all the authentic information we have concerning Enoch, and it would be idle to supplement it with the fictions of ancient commentators. Enoch is called the seventh from Adam, to distinguish him from the other Enoch of the line of Cain, who was the third from Adam. In the first patriarchs God was pleased to manifest to men portions of the truth in reference to true religion. These men of the olden times were not only themselves taught of God, but they were also teachers of their age, and types in whom great truths were exhibited. Abel taught the need of approaching the Lord with sacrifice, the need of atonement by blood: he laid the lamb upon the altar, and sealed his testimony with his own blood. Atonement is so precious a truth that to die for its defence is a worthy deed, and from the very first it is a doctrine which has secured its martyrs, who being dead yet speak.

Then Seth and Enos taught men the necessity of a distinct avowal of their faith in the Lord, and the need of assembling for his worship, for we read concerning the days of Enos and Seth, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." Those who worshipped through the

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atonement separated themselves from the rest of men, assembled as a church in the name of the Lord, and worshipped, calling upon the name of Jehovah. The heart must first believe in the great sacrifice with Abel, and then the mouth must confess the same with Seth. Then came Enoch whose life went beyond the reception and confession of the atonement, for he set before men the great truth of communion with God; he displayed in his life the relation of the believer to the Most High, and showed how near the living God condescends to be to his own children. May our progress in knowledge be similar to the growth of the patriarchal teaching. Brethren, you do know as Abel did the sacrificial lamb, your confidence is in the precious blood, and so by faith you bring to God the most acceptable of all offerings. Having advanced so far the most of us have proceeded a step further, and we have called upon the name, and are the avowed followers of Jesus. We have given ourselves up to the Lord in the solemn burial of baptism, when we were baptised into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, because we reckoned ourselves dead in Christ to all the world, and risen with him into newness of life. Henceforth the divine name is named on us, and we are no more our own. And now we gather together in our church capacity, we assemble around the table of fellowship, we unite in our meetings for prayer and worship, and the centre for us all is the name of the Lord. We are separated from the world, and set apart to be a people who declare his name. Thus far well; we have seen the sacrifice of Jesus as *the way* with Abel; and we have avowed *the truth* with Seth; now let us take the next step and know *the life* with Enoch. Let us endeavour to walk with God as Enoch did.

Perhaps a meditation upon the holy patriarch's life may help us to imitate it; while considering what he was, and under what circumstances he came to be so, we may by the Holy Spirit be helped to reach the point to which he attained. This is the desire of every godly man, all the saints desire communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The constant cry of our soul is to our Lord, "Abide with me." I buried yesterday one of the excellent of the earth, who loved and feared and served his God far better than most of us; he was an eminently devout brother, and one of the last wishes of his heart he had committed to writing in a letter to a friend, when he little thought of dying. It was this "I have longed to realize the life of Enoch, and to walk with God;"—

"Oh for a closer walk with God!"

He did but write what you and I also feel. If such be your desires, and such I feel sure they are, so surely as you are the Lord's people, then I hope a consideration of the life of Enoch may help you towards the realization of your wish.

First, then, *what does Enoch's walking with God imply?* It is a short description of a man's life, but there is a mint of meaning in it; secondly, *what circumstances were connected with his remarkable life?* for these are highly instructive: and thirdly, *what was the close of it?* It was as remarkable as the life itself.

1. First, then, WHAT IS MEANT BY ENOCH'S WALKING WITH GOD?

Paul helps us to our first observation upon this by his note in the Hebrews. His walk with God was a testimony that *Enoch was well pleasing to God*. "Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." This is evidently the apostle's interpretation of his walking with God, and it is a most correct one, for the Lord will not walk with a man in whom he has no pleasure. Can two walk together, except they be agreed? If men walk contrary to God, he will not walk *with* them, but contrary to them. Walking together implies amity, friendship, intimacy, love, and these cannot exist between God and the soul unless the man is acceptable unto the Lord. Doubtless Enoch, like Elias, was a man of like passions with ourselves. He had fallen with the rest of mankind in the sin of Adam, there was sin about him as there is sin about us by nature, and he had gone astray in act and deed as all we, like sheep, have done: and therefore he needed pardon and cleansing, even as we do. Then to be pleasing with God it was needful that he should be forgiven and justified, even as we are; for no man can be pleasing to God till sin is pardoned and righteousness is imputed. To this end there must be faith, for there can be no justification except by faith, and as we have said already, there is no pleasing God except our persons are justified. Right well, then, does the apostle say, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and by faith Enoch was made pleasing to God, even as we are at this day. This is worthy of earnest notice, brethren, because this way of faith is open to us. If Enoch had been pleasing to God by virtue of some extraordinary gifts and talents, or by reason of marvellous achievements and miraculous works, we might have been in despair; but if he was pleasing to God through faith, that same faith which saved the dying thief, that same faith which has been wrought in you and in me, then the wicket gate at the head of the way in which men walk with God is open to us also. If we have faith we may enter into fellowship with the Lord. How this ought to endear faith to us! The highest grades of spiritual life depend upon the lower ones, and rise out of them. If you want to walk with God as a man of God, you must begin by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, simply, as a babe in grace. The highest saintship must commence by the confession of our sinnership, and our laying hold upon Christ crucified. Not otherwise does the strongest believer live than the weakest believer; and if you are to grow to be among the strongest of the Lord's warriors, it must be by faith which lays hold upon divine strength. Beginning in the Spirit you are not to be made perfect in the flesh; you are not to proceed a certain distance by faith in Christ, and then to commence living by your own works; your walk is to continue as it begun. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him." Enoch was always pleasing to God, but it was because he always believed, and lived in the power of his faith. This is worth knowing and remembering, for we may yet be tempted to strive for some imaginary higher style of religious life by looking to our feelings instead of looking alone to the Lord. We must not remove our eye from looking alone to Jesus himself even to admire his image within ourselves; for if we do so we shall go backward rather than forward. No, beloved; by faith Enoch became pleasing to God, and by faith he walked with God: let us follow in his track.

Next, when we read that Enoch walked with God we are to understand that *he realized the divine presence*. You cannot consciously walk with a person whose existence is not known to you. When we walk with a man, we know that he is there, we hear his footfall if we cannot see his face; we have some very clear perception that there is such a person at our side. Now, if we look to the Hebrews again, Paul tells us "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Enoch's faith, then, was a realizing faith. He did not believe things as a matter of creed, and then put them up on the shelf out of the way, as too many do: he was not merely orthodox in head, but the truth had entered into his heart, and what he believed was true to him, practically true, true as a matter of fact in his daily life. He walked with God: it was not that he thought of God merely, that he speculated about God, that he argued about God, that he read about God, that he talked about God, but he *walked* with God, which is the practical and experimental part of true godliness. In his daily life he realized that God was with him, and he regarded him as a living friend, in whom he confided and by whom he was loved. Oh, beloved, do you not see that if you are to reach to the highest style of Christian life you must do it through the realization of those very things which by faith you have received? Grasp them, let them be to you substance and evidence. Make them sure, look upon them, handle them, taste them in your inmost soul, and so know them beyond all question. You must see him who is invisible, and possess that which cannot be as yet enjoyed. Believe not only that God is, but that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, for this according to Paul is the Enoch faith. God realized as existing, observing, judging, and rewarding human deeds: a real God, really with us—this we must know, or there is no walking with God.

Then, as we read that Enoch walked with God, we have no doubt it signifies that *he had very familiar intercourse* with the Most High. I scarcely know an intercourse that is more free, pleasant, and cordial than that which arises out of constant walking with a friend. If I wished to find a man's most familiar friend it would surely be one with whom he daily walked. If you were to say "I sometimes go into his house and sit a little while with him;" it would not amount to so much as when you can say "I have from day to day walked the fields and climbed the hills with him." In walking, friends become communicative—one tells his trouble, and the other strives to console him under it, and then imparts to him his own secret in return. When persons are constantly in the habit of walking together from choice, you may be quite sure there are many communications between them with which no stranger may intermeddle. If I wanted to know a man through and through, I should want to walk with him for a time, for walking communion brings out parts of the man which even in domestic life may be concealed. Walking for a continuance implies and engenders close fellowship and great familiarity between friends. But will God in very deed thus walk with men? Yes, he did so with Enoch, and he has done so with many of his people since. He tells us his secret, the secret of the Lord, which he reveals only to them that fear him, and we tell to him alike our joys in praise, our sorrows in prayer, and our sins in confession. The heart

unloads itself of all its cares into the heart of him that careth for us ; and the Lord pours forth his floods of goodness as he imparts to the beloved ones a sense of his own everlasting love to them. This is the very flower and sweetness of Christian experience, its lily and its rose, its calamus and myrrh. If you would taste the cream of Christian life, it is found in having a realising faith, and entering into intimate intercourse with the heavenly Father. So Enoch walked with God.

Next it is implied in the term "walked" that *his intercourse with God was continuous*. As an old divine has well remarked, he did not take a turn or two with God and then leave his company, but he walked with God for hundreds of years. It is implied in the text that this was the tenor of his life throughout the whole of its three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God after Methuselah had been born, three hundred years, and doubtless he had walked with him before. What a splendid walk ! A walk of three hundred years ! One might desire a change of company if he walked with anybody else, but to walk with God for three centuries was so sweet that the patriarch kept on with his walk until he walked beyond time and space, and walked into paradise, where he is still marching on in the same divine society. He had heaven on earth, and it was therefore not so wonderful that he glided away from earth to heaven so easily. He did not commune with God by fits and starts, but he abode in the conscious love of God. He did not now and then climb to the heights of elevated piety and then descend into the marshy valley of lukewarmness ; but he continued in the calm, happy, equable enjoyment of fellowship with God from day to day. Night with its sleep did not suspend it ; day with its cares did not endanger it. It was not a run, a rush, a leap, a spurt, but a steady *walk*. On, on, through three happy centuries and more did Enoch continue to walk with God.

It is implied also in this phrase that *his life was progressive* : for if a man walks either by himself or with anybody else, he makes progress, he goes forward. Enoch walked with God. At the end of two hundred years he was not where he began, he was in the same company, but he had gone forward in the right way. At the end of the third hundred years Enoch enjoyed more, understood more, loved more, had received more, and could give out more, for he had gone forward in all respects. A man who walks with God will necessarily grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God, and in likeness to Christ. You cannot suppose a perpetual walk with God year after year, without the favoured person being strengthened, sanctified, and rendered more able to glorify God. So I gather that Enoch's life was a life of spiritual progress, he went from strength to strength, and made headway in the gracious pilgrimage. May God grant us to be pressing onward ourselves.

Suffer a few more observations upon Enoch's walk. In "Kitto's Daily Bible Readings" there is an exceedingly pleasing piece, illustrating what it must be to walk with God by the figure of a father's taking his little son by the hand and walking forth with him upon the breezy hills. He says, "As that child walks with thee, so do thou walk with God. That child loves thee now. The world—the cold and cruel world—has not yet come between his heart and thine. His love *now* is the

purest and most beautiful he will ever feel, or thou wilt ever receive. Cherish it well, and as that child walks *lovingly* with thee, so do thou walk *lovingly* with God." It is a delight to such children to be with their father. The roughness of the way or of the weather is nothing to them: it is joy enough to go for a walk with father. There is a warm, tender, affectionate grip of the hand and a beaming smile of the eye as they look up to father while he conducts them over hill and dale. Such a walk is *humble* too, for the child looks upon its father as the greatest and wisest man that ever lived. He considers him to be the incarnation of everything that is strong and wise, and all that his father says or does he admires. As he walks along he feels for his father the utmost affection, but his reverence is equally strong: he is very near his father, but yet he is only a child, and looks up to his father as his king. Moreover such a walk is one of *perfect confidence*. The boy is not afraid of missing his way, he trusts implicitly his father's guidance. His father's arm will screen him from all danger, and therefore he does not so much as give it a thought—why should he? If care is needed as to the road, it is his father's business to see to it, and the child, therefore, never dreams of anxiety; why should he? If any difficult place is to be passed, the father will have to lift the boy over it, or help him through it—the child meanwhile is merry as a bird—why should he not be? Thus should the believer walk with God, resting on eternal tenderness and rejoicing in undoubted love. A believer should be unconscious of dread either as to the present or to the future. Beloved friend in Christ, your Father may be trusted, he will supply all your need.

"Thou art as much his care as if beside
No man or angel lived in heaven or earth."

What an *instructive* walk a child has with a wise, communicative parent! How many of his little puzzles are explained to him, how everything about him is illuminated by the father's wisdom. The boy every step he takes becomes the wiser for such companionship. Oh, happy children of God, who have been taught of their Father while they have walked with him! Enoch must have been a man of profound knowledge and great wisdom as to divine things. He must have dived into the deep things of God beyond most men.

His life must also have been a *holy* life, because he walked with God, and God never walks out of the way of holiness. If we walk with God, we must walk according to truth, justice, and love. The Lord has no company with the unjust and rebellious, and therefore we know that he who walked with God must have been an upright and holy man.

Enoch's life must, moreover, have been a *happy* one. Who could be unhappy with such a companion! With God himself to be with us the way can never be dreary. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Granted that God is your companion, and your road must be a way of pleasantness and a path of peace.

Did Enoch walk with God, then his pilgrimage must have been *safe*. What a guard is the Great Jehovah! He is sun and shield, he giveth grace and glory. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the **Most**

High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Nothing can harm the man who is walking with the Lord God at his right hand.

And oh, what an *honourable* thing it is to walk with the Eternal ! Many a man would give thousands to walk with a king. Numbers of people are such worshippers of dignities that if a king did but smile at them they would be intoxicated with delight. What, then, is the honour of walking with the King of kings ! What a patent of nobility it is to be permitted to walk with the blessed and only Potentate all one's life long ! Who is he that is thus favoured to be the King's companion, to walk alone with him, and to become his familiar friend ? Jehovah ruleth earth and heaven, and hell, and is Lord of all who shall walk with *him* ! If it were only for the honour of it, oh Christians, how you ought to pant to walk with God. Enoch found it safe, happy, holy, honourable, and I know not how much more that is excellent, but certainly this was a golden life ; where shall we find anything to equal it ?

II. Secondly, let us consider WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES WERE CONNECTED WITH ENOCH'S WALKING WITH GOD ? The first remark is that *the details of his life are very few*. We do not know much about Enoch, and this is to his advantage. Happy is the nation which has no history, for a nation which has a history has been vexed with wars and revolutions, and bloodshed ; but a nation that is always happy, peaceful, and prosperous has no chronicle to attract the lover of sensations. Happy is Enoch that we cannot write a long biography of him ; the few words, "Enoch walked with God," suffice to depict his whole career, until "he was not, for God took him." If you go and look at a farmer's field, and you can say of it when you come back, "I saw yellow flowers covering it till it seemed a cloth of gold, and then I spied out here and there white flowers like silver buttons set on the golden vesture, and blue corn-flowers also looked up with their lovely eyes, and bejewelled the whole," you will think that it is a very pretty field if you are a child ; but the farmer shakes his head, for he knows that it is in bad condition, and overrun with weeds ; but if you come back and simply say, "It is as fine a piece of wheat as ever grew, and that is all," then your description, though brief, is very satisfactory. Many of those dazzling events and striking incidents and sensational adventures which go to make up an interesting biography may attract attention, but they do not minister to the real excellence of the life. No life can surpass that of a man who quietly continues to serve God in the place where providence has placed him. I believe that in the judgment of angels and all pure-minded beings that woman's life is most to be admired which consists simply of this : "She did what she could ;" and that man's life shall be the most noteworthy of whom it can be said : "He followed the Lord fully." Enoch's life has no adventures ; is it not adventure enough for a man to walk with God ? What ambition can crave a nobler existence than abiding in fellowship with the Eternal ?

But some will say, "Well, but Enoch must have been very peculiarly situated : he was no doubt placed in very advantageous circumstances for piety." Now, observe that this was not so, for first, *he was a public man*. He is called the "seventh from Adam." He was a notable man, and looked up to as one of the fathers of his age. A patriarch in those

days must have been a man of mark, loaded with responsibility as well as with honour. The ancient custom was that the head of the family was prophet, priest, and king in his household, and abroad if he was a man of station and substance he was counsellor, magistrate and ruler. Enoch was a great man in his day, one of the most important of the period ; hence we may be sure he had his trials, and bore the brunt of opposition from the powerful ungodly party which opposed the ways of godliness. He is mentioned among a noble list of men. Some have unwisely thought, "I could walk with God if I had a little cottage, if I lived in a quiet village, but you see I am a public man, I occupy a position of trust, and I have to mix with my fellow men. I do not see how I am to walk with God." Ah, my dear friend, but Enoch did ; though he was undoubtedly a man distinguished in his time, and full of public cares, yet he lost not the thread of sacred converse with heaven, but held on in his holy course through a life of centuries.

Note again that *Enoch was a family man*. "Enoch walked with God and begat sons and daughters." Some have said, "Ah, you cannot live as you like if you have a lot of children about you. Do not tell me about keeping up your hours of prayer and quiet reading of the Scriptures if you have a large family of little ones ; you will be disturbed, and there will be many domestic incidents which will be sure to try your temper and upset your equanimity. Get away into the woods, and find a hermit's cell, there with your brown jug of water and your loaf of bread, you may be able to walk with God, but with a wife, not always amiable, and a troop of children who are never quiet, neither by day nor night, how can a man be expected to walk with God ?" The wife on the other hand exclaims, "I believe that had I remained a single woman I might have walked with God. When I was a young woman I was full of devotion, but now with my husband, who is not always in the best of tempers, and with my children, who seem to have an unlimited number of wants, and never to have them satisfied, how is it possible that I can walk with God ?" We turn to Enoch again, and we are confident that it can be done. "Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters, and all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years." Thus, you see, he was a public man, and he was a family man, and yet he walked with God for more than three hundred years. There is no need to be a hermit, or to renounce the married life in order to live near to God.

In addition to this, *Enoch lived in a very evil age*. He was prominent at a time when sin was beginning to cover the earth, not very long before the earth was corrupt and God saw fit to sweep the whole population from off its surface on account of sin. Enoch lived in a day of mockers and despisers. You know that from his prophecy, as recorded by Jude. He prophesied, saying, "The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." He lived when few loved God and when those who professed to do so were being drawn aside by the blandishments of the daughters of men. Church and state were proposing an alliance,

fashion and pleasure ruled the hour, and unhallowed compromise was the order of the day. He lived towards the close of those primitive times wherein long lives had produced great sinners, and great sinners had invented great provocations of God. Do not complain, therefore, of your times and of your neighbours and other surroundings, for amid them all you may still walk with God.

Enoch walked with God, and in consequence thereof *he bore his witness for God*. "Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied." He could not be silent, the fire burned within his soul, and could not be restrained. When he had delivered his testimony it is clear that he encountered opposition. I am certain that he did so from the context in Jude, because the passage in Jude has to do with murmurers and "complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words," and Enoch is brought in as having had to do with such persons. His sermon shows that he was a man who stood firm amidst a torrent of blasphemy and rebuke, carrying on the great controversy for the truth of God against the wicked lives and licentious tongues of the scoffers of his age; for he says, "Behold, the Lord cometh with myriads of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed." It is clear that they spoke against Enoch, they rejected his testimony, they grieved his spirit, and he mourned that in this they were speaking against God; for he speaks "of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." He saw their ungodly lives, and bore witness against them. It is remarkable that his great subject should have been the second advent, and it is still more noteworthy that the two other men whom one would select as living nearest to God, namely, Daniel and John, were both men who spoke much concerning the coming of the Lord and the great judgment-day. I need not quote the words of Daniel, who tells us of the judgment which is to be set, and of the Ancient of Days who shall come upon his throne; nor need I repeat the constant witness of John concerning the Lord's second coming, I will only mention his fervent exclamation, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus."

Thus you see that Enoch was a preacher of the word of God, and therefore he had a care over and above that which falls to the lot of most of you: and yet with that and all the rest put together he could please God until his life's end, if I may speak of an end to a life which ran into an endless state of joy: he continued as long as he was here to walk in faith, to walk in a manner in which God was pleased, and so his communion with the Lord was never broken.

III. This brings us to conclude with the third head—WHAT WAS THE CLOSE OF ENOCH'S WALK?

We would first remark that *he finished his work early*. Enoch walked with God, and that was such a good, sure, progressive walk that he travelled faster, and reached his house sooner, than those of us who walk with God sometimes and with the world at other times. Three hundred and sixty-five years would have been a long life to us, but it was a short life for that period when several patriarchs attained to nearly a thousand years of age. Enoch's life as compared to the usual life of the period was like a life of thirty or thirty-five years in these

short-lived ages,—in fact, the best parallel to it is the life of our Lord. As compared with the extended ages of men of his period Enoch's life was of about the same length as that of the Lord Jesus in comparison with such lives as ours. He passed away comparatively a young man, as our dear brother and elder Verdon, just departed, has done: and we do not wonder that he did. They say "Whom the gods love die young:" and both Enoch and Verdon were men greatly beloved. Perhaps these holy men ended their career so soon because they had done their life-work so diligently that they finished betimes. Some workmen if they have a job to do in your house are about it all day long, or rather all the week long, and make no end of chips and confusion. No wonder that some people live a long while, for they had need to do so to do anything at all! But this man did his work so well, and kept so close to God that his day's work was done at noon, and the Lord said, "Come home, Enoch, there is no need for you to be out of heaven any longer; you have borne your testimony, you have lived your life; through all the ages men will look upon you as a model man, and therefore you may come home." God never keeps his wheat out in the fields longer than is necessary, when it is ripe he reaps it at once: when his people are ready to go home he will take them home. Do not regret the death of a good man while he is young; on the contrary, bless God that still there is some early ripening wheat in the world, and that some of his saints are sanctified so speedily.

But what did happen to Enoch? I am afraid I have said he died, or that I shall say so, it is so natural to speak of men as dying, but he alone and one other of all the human race are all that have entered the heavenly Canaan without fording the river of death. We are told concerning him that "he was not." Those gentlemen who believe that the word to "die" signifies to be annihilated, would have been still more confirmed in their views if the words in my text, "he was not" had been applied to all departed men, for if any expression might signify annihilation on their mode of translation—this is the one. "He was not" does not, however, mean that he was annihilated, and neither does the far feebler term of dying signify anything of the kind. "He was not"; that is to say, he was not *here*, that is all. He was gone from earth, but he was *there*, there where God had translated him. He was, he is with God, and that without having tasted death. Do not grudge him his avoidance of death. It was a favour, but not by any means so great as some would think, for those who do not die must undergo a change, and Enoch was changed. "We shall not all sleep," says the apostle, "but we shall all be changed." The flesh and blood of Enoch could not inherit the kingdom of God: in a moment he underwent a transformation which you and I will have to undergo in the day of the resurrection; and so, though he was not on earth, he was translated or transplanted from the gardens of earth to the Paradise above. Now, if there is any man in the world that shall never die it is he who walks with God. If there is any man to whom death will be as nothing, it is the man who has looked to the second advent of Christ and gloried in it; if there is any man who, though he pass through the iron gates of death shall never feel the terror of the grim foe, it is the man whose life below has been perpetual communion

with God. Go not about by any other way to escape the pangs of death, but walk with God, and you will be able to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

It is said of him that "*God took him.*" A very remarkable expression. Perhaps he did it in some visible manner. I should not wonder. Perhaps the whole of the patriarchs saw him depart even as the apostles were present when our Lord was taken up. However that may be, there was some special rapture, some distinct taking up of this choice one to the throne of the Most High. "He was not, for God took him."

Note that *he was missed*. This is one thing which I could not overlook. *He was missed*, for the apostle says he "was not found." Now, if a man is not found, it shows that somebody looked after him. When Elijah went to heaven, you remember fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and searched for him. I do not wonder that they did; they would not meet with an Elijah every day, and when he was gone away, body and all, they might well look for him. Enoch was not found, but they looked after him. A good man is missed. A true child of God in a church like this, working and serving his Master, is only one among five thousand; but if he has walked with God his decease is lamented. The dear brother whom we have just buried we shall miss, his brother elders will miss him, the many who have been converted to God and helped by his means will miss him, and assuredly I shall miss him. I look towards the spot where he used to sit,—I trust that someone else will sit there who will be half as useful as he was; it will be almost more than I can expect. We do not want so to live and die that nobody will care whether we are on earth or not. Enoch was missed when he was gone, and so will they be who walk with God.

Last of all, *Enoch's departure was a testimony*. What did he say by the fact that "he was not, for God took him," but this: there is a future state? Men had begun to doubt it, but when they said, "Where is Enoch?" and those who had witnessed his departure said "God took him," it was to them an evidence that there was a God, and that there was another world. And when they said, "But where is his body?" there was another lesson. Two men had died before him, I mean two whose deaths are recorded in Scripture,—Abel was killed, and his witness was that the seed of the serpent hates the woman's seed; Adam, too, had died about fifty years before Enoch's translation, whose witness was that, however late the penalty may come, yet the soul that sinneth it shall die. Now comes Enoch, and his testimony is that the body is capable of immortality. He could not bear testimony to resurrection, for he did not die: for that we have testimony in Christ, who is the first fruits from among the dead; but the testimony of Enoch went a good way towards it, for it bore evidence that the body was capable of being immortal, and of living in a heavenly condition. "He was not, for God took him."

His departure also was a testimony to mankind that there is a reward for the righteous, that God does not sit with stony eyes regardless of the sins of the wicked, or of the virtues of his saints, but that he sees and is pleased with his people who walk with him, and that he can give them even now present rewards by delivering them from the pangs of death,

and therefore he will certainly give rewards to all his people in some way or other. Thus you see, living and dying—nay, not dying, again I do mistake—living and being translated, Enoch was still a witness to his generation, and I do pray that all of us, whether we live or whether we sleep, may be witnesses for God. Oh that we could live as my good brother Verdon, whom we have lately buried, lived, whose soul was on fire with love to Christ. He had a very passion for souls. I scarcely think there is one among us who did as much as he, for though he had to earn his daily bread, his evenings were spent with us in the service of the Lord, or in preaching the gospel, and then all night long he frequently paced the weary streets, looking after the fallen, that he might bring them in, and often went to his morning's work unrested, except by the rest which he found in the service of Christ. He would sometimes meet a brother with eyes full of joy, and say, "Five souls won for Christ last night." At other times after a sermon here he was a great soul hunter, and would fetch enquirers downstairs into the prayer-meeting, and when he had squeezed my hand he would say in his Swiss tones, which I cannot imitate, "Jesus saved some more last night : more souls were brought to Jesus." For him to live was to win souls. He was the youngest in our eldership, but the grey-heads do him honour. As we stood weeping about his tomb, there was not one among us but what felt that we had lost a true brother and a valiant fellow-soldier. The Lord raise up others among you to do what Elder Verdon did ! The Lord quicken the elder brethren to be more active than they are, and make the young ones more devoted. Our ranks are broken, who shall fill up the gap ? We are getting fewer and fewer as the Lord takes one and another home of the best instructed and of the bravest hearted ; but recruits are daily coming in. May others come forward—yea, Lord, bring them forward by thy Holy Spirit to be leaders in the front rank, that as the vanguard melts into the church triumphant, the rear may continually find additions. Translated to the skies are some, may others be translated out of darkness into marvellous light, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxix. 33—56.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—122, 780, 775.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE RECORDERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 25TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON,

“To record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel.”—1 Chronicles xvi. 4.

DAVID took care of every part of divine worship; he saw that nothing was neglected in the service of the God in whom he delighted. Let this stand as an example to us to be careful about everything which concerns the honour of God. Do not allow any one of the duties of your holy faith to be forgotten, but seek to exhibit harmonious and entire obedience to the divine will. Do not merely attend to what are called religious duties, but with equal religiousness regard your social duties, and present to the Lord as far as you can a complete service. Such David desired to do. You observe that he had those about him who offered burnt offerings unto the Lord continually, morning and evening, as God had commanded—these things were not to be left undone. And then he set apart certain others to attend to the service of song. Theirs it was to sound the trumpets and to call the people together; theirs to touch the harmonious strings of harps, or to sound with cymbals of brass, or to lift their voices on high in the sweet praises of Jehovah; for God is to be served with sacrifice, and praised with song. Our God accepts us when we labour for him, and when we praise him: let both be done heartily. It were a pity if we worked so hard that we could not sing; it were equally unhappy if we sang so much that we idled away our time; there must be a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, music and fruit, service and song. There was also a third company set apart for a somewhat extraordinary work, namely, as our text tells us, *to record*. They were to take notes of what God had done, and was doing; they were to be the chronicles of the nation, and out of their chronicles they were to compose the psalms and songs. Perhaps that is the meaning of the word “record” here, but the original bears another meaning—“to bring to remembrance.” If they were not to act as historians to record, they were as minstrels

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to tell out what had been written in old time, and bring it to remembrance. I rather prefer the idea that their duty was to do both—to record the lovingkindness of the Lord and to bring to the remembrance of the people what the Lord's right hand had done in former times. Now, if you think a minute, this third class of people who are placed between the Levites before the ark, and the singers who thanked and praised the Lord would be useful both to those who went before and to those who followed after. Those who had to serve before the ark of the Lord are mentioned first. Now, what could so cheer them in their service as to read of the goodness of the Lord? What so inspire them to attend reverently to the service of the Lord's house as to remember the former lovingkindnesses of the Lord? What arguments could they have for fidelity that should be more powerful than the record of his mercy which endureth for ever? Those who were to conduct the praising and the thanksgiving are mentioned after these recorders. But what is the raw material of which praise is made but the record of what God is and of what he has done for his people? Methinks whenever they wanted to sing they would turn to these remembrancers and recorders, and say to them "Tell us something of what God has done, for the simple record of Jehovah's acts is the noblest psalmody." Do you notice that, whenever we praise God best, we simply declare what he is, for the bare fact about God is the highest praise, and you have only to mention what he does in order to produce the sublimest poetry: the grateful mention of his glorious acts is in itself adoration. You cannot adore the Lord better than by devoutly rehearsing his mighty acts—so good is his name, so blessed are his deeds. "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can shew forth all his praise?"

Now, from the fact that David set apart certain Levites to record, I gather three or four thoughts, of which I am going to speak to-night. The first is,—it is implied that *there is a fault in man's memory*. It is equally clear, in the second place, that *we ought to endeavour to assist memory*. Thirdly, it is certain, too, from the appointment of recorders, that *there is a good deal worth remembering*. And, fourthly, from the connection of these recorders with the singers we see that, *to right-minded persons memory will always produce praise*: when we have recorded the great mercies of the Lord, then we shall be sure to thank and praise him.

I. First of all, we may gather, I think, without any straining of the text, that if recorders were appointed, **THERE IS SOME FAULT IN OUR MEMORY TOWARDS THE LORD.**

What faults there are in our memory touching the work and word of God! Perhaps some of you have very powerful memories, and may be able to treasure up whole volumes as some have done. It might be said of you as it was of Dr. Lawson, that if the whole Bible had been destroyed, he could have reproduced it from memory. This is a great gift and a worthy use for it, but I fear that few of us have it. It is not likely that men could say of us as of the famous Grecian, that out of ten thousand soldiers he knew every one of his men by name. I do not find fault with short memories, but with good memories which are treacherous towards divine things. What I complain of is that

memory may be very strong concerning self-interest, grievances, and trials, and yet towards God's mercies it may be very weak. I am not going to speak about memory in general, I speak only of that faculty as it is exercised towards the favours and lovingkindnesses of the Lord—and I am sure there is a fault in it, for, first of all, *it has been prejudiced by the fall*. Do you not know that if anything bad ever reaches your ear you cannot forget it. That lewd song which you heard in your youth—in your unregenerate times; you would give everything to forget it, but it will come up—a snatch of it has perhaps been suggested by a hymn tune sung in worship, or even by the language used in prayer. What a grasp memory has for things that never ought to have crossed the mind at all, and which, though they have crossed the mind, ought to be forgotten. Well said an old divine, "Man's memory is a pond in which all the fish die and all the frogs live." I am sure it is so. The bad remains and the good—ah, how you have to charge and constrain yourself to recollect a tithe of it. The filth of Sodom is drawn to shore by memory, but the fair products of Jerusalem are permitted to glide down the stream to the ocean of oblivion. The fall has given a sad bias to memory; like a strainer it lets the good liquor run through and only retains the dregs.

Again, memory towards God's mercy has been *very much impaired by neglect*. Any one part of the body left unused will lose power, and any faculty of the mind which is never exercised will gradually become weak. Now you may have very powerful memories, as I said before, towards earthly things, but I will venture to say that some of you have never sought to remember the mercies of the Lord. Nay, you have not seen them to be God's mercies. It has never occurred to you to try and recollect what God has done for you. I would not bring a harsh impeachment, but I suggest the question,—Have you not lived as if there were no God? as if the mercies of every day were indeed of your own procuring? as if you had no indebtedness to God, and were under no obligation to be grateful to him? I do not wonder that your memory towards divine things is weak, for you have never exercised it—never thought of exercising it; and consequently, my friend, if ever you are to learn to praise the Lord you will have need of great helps in the work, for your memory will not furnish you with materials. It has no store of good things with which to feed your devotion, you have kept its chambers empty by neglect.

Memory, touching God's mercy, too, is often *overloaded with other things*. Memory can only carry a certain amount, but, oh, what waggon-loads of mischief memory is freighted with! Some of us can remember so little that it is a pity for us to try to recollect anything trifling or of minor importance. It might be well to dedicate that faculty to the weightiest things only: to things imperative for this life, to things essential for the life to come. How foolishly some will stuff up their memory with rubbish that is not worth harbouring. There are songs and pieces of "poetry," so called, and scraps taken from novels, and I know not what besides, with which poor memory is gorged, till it is blown out as a balloon with foul gas. It is fed upon mere husks till it is surfeited, stuffed, and crammed, and labours under an indigestion. I think Aristotle used to call memory the

stomach of the soul, in which it retains and digests what it gathers; but men cram it full of everything that it does not want—upon which the soul cannot really feed, and thus they ruin it for remembering the best things. Some people can hardly carry home the text of the discourse. Is it likely they would? Other thoughts choke up the memory and put the good thing, the gracious thing, the grateful thing, the right thing, entirely out of the mind. Unload thy memory to-night, man, if thou canst, even of thy necessary cares. It is good when a sermon helps to unload you. You recollect the man who said that when he went to church generally he used to calculate how many looms the building would hold, and how many workmen might be employed in it; but, said he, "When I heard Mr. Whitefield I forgot that there was a loom in the whole world." I wish it was always so in God's house. But there, the good woman recollects her household, she does not know whether she put the guard on the fire; she wonders what may have become of the baby while she is away. Another misses a ring from her finger; did she leave it in the basin when she washed her hands before she came away? The merchant is worrying about that bill which is coming due to-morrow: he wishes that he could forget it, but the business will come in. And this is why you cannot remember God's mercy, because your memory is occupying itself with a host of earthly things which ought not to intrude into God's day and into God's worship; or if they do should be treated as Abraham treated the carnivorous birds when they came down upon his sacrifice. The ravens and the kites came to defile and eat what he had offered unto God, but we read that "when the birds came down upon the sacrifice Abraham drove them away." So must you try to do. When the time has come to remember God's mercies and to worship him, you must keep the birds away, or else they will devour the ripe fruit of your praise before you can gather it.

Memory has also suffered from another cause, namely, from *its connection with the other faculties*. Every power of the mind has been injured by sin. The evil results of the fall went through the entire system, and weakened and perverted our entire nature, so that the whole head is sick. *The understanding* among the rest, a very noble power, has been very much darkened, and, as every single part of a man operates upon the rest, the darkening of the understanding has caused a grievous weakening of the memory with regard to divine things. You will see this in a minute, for what a man does not understand he does not readily remember. Many forget God's mercies because they do not appreciate them when they have them. They do not see the mercy of them; they have not the power to see how much love there is in them, and how little they deserve them, and therefore they are not impressed by them so as to make a note of their being received. When daily favours come such men take them into stock as wholesale dealers receive parcels of goods, and send them out again without so much as opening them, or taking their quantity. They scarcely know the meaning of the lovingkindness of the Lord, for he is not in all their thoughts. Of course, a man does not remember what he does not understand. If you set a boy to learn a passage without any meaning in it, he may be able to repeat it to you the next time he

says his lesson, but before long it must glide out of his memory, because he does not understand it. Becloud the light of the understanding, and the image formed upon the memory will be dull and indistinct, and very apt to vanish away.

Again, *the affections* have been perverted, as well as the understanding. Man, by nature, does not love God. I tremble when I think of that sad truth, for it seems to me the most awful thing that can happen to an intelligent being not to love God. That would be my hell. I count it the hell of hell not to love God : to be in such a condition that the infinitely lovable one, so perfect, both in his character and his actions, so divinely fitted to be adored, should not be loved is horrible. It is death, and worse than death. I will not say it is blindness, deafness, and the loss of every honourable moral power : it is utter death not to love God. It is partly because we do not love him that we forget his mercies. Reflect a moment, and you will soon see. Here is a present which has been given you by an entire stranger, and though it may be of some value, you do not think much of it ; but there is a ring that was given you by your mother—your mother now among the angels. Ah, you will not forget that gift, love has registered it among your richest possessions. I have many things that have been given to me by divers friends, and I value them all : I never forget them, I never can because of my esteem and affection for those who gave them to me. And so when you view divine mercy as given you by your dear and ever blessed Father in heaven, then you do not forget it ; but if it is merely regarded as a passing stranger's gift, you care not for it. If you think of a blessing as "the gift of fortune," as the world generally does, or look upon it as a windfall from the tree of luck, you will not remember it. See in the bread you eat a Father's hand supplying you ; see even in the cup of cold water the bounty of your God ; see in the comforts of home and health, and the sparing of your reason, the goodness of him who loves you and whom you love ; and memory will put forth her strength. Want of love breeds want of recollection in us, and so the memory grows faulty.

And, alas, one thing more. Our memory of God's goodness is often *crushed down by a sense of present pain*. When you suffer from sharp pains and weary aches and a fevered brow, you are prone to forget the days of health and strength, and only recollect the sharp intervals of weakness and sorrow. When you stand over the grave of one you love, you are apt in the loss to forget the loan. When a dear one is taken away, the right way to look at it is, that a precious loan has been called in by its owner. We ought to be very grateful to have been allowed to borrow the comfort so long, and ought not to repine when the owner takes back what he so kindly lent. The husband to whom you have been married these ten years, or the child that has nestled in your bosom two years, or the friend that communed with you half a lifetime, or the brother who was such a comfort all his days—when these are gone, do not look at the going only, but thank God that you ever had them. Be honest enough to acknowledge the good as well as to lament the evil. Bless a taking as well as a giving God, for he takes but what he gave. It is not so with us as a rule. We are living in the present too much ; we strike a mark of oblivion across the happy

past, we look with dread upon the unknown future, and dwell on the troublous present, and so we forget the Lord's mercy to us. You are getting old now and you are feeble, but bless the Lord you had fifty years of manly vigour. You cannot now do what you once did, and your mind is enfeebled, but bless God there was a time when you could serve him with body and soul without fatigue. Perhaps you are brought low in estate and are afraid of poverty; be grateful that you have had enough and to spare for many long years. Perhaps you are now a little sad. Ay, but recollect the days when you used to praise the Lord on the high-sounding cymbals, and stood upon the high places of the earth. Do not let memory fail you because of the present crushing sorrow, but bless the name of the Lord for what he has done. May the Holy Spirit help your infirmities, and bring the lovingkindness of past years to your remembrance.

Memory is defective—this is our first inference, and I think it is clear enough.

II. Now, secondly, as David appointed recorders, this proves, in the second place, that **WE OUGHT TO DO ALL THAT WE CAN TO ASSIST OUR MEMORIES TOWARDS GOD.** We should not allow the mercies of the Lord to lie forgotten in unthankfulness and without praises due, if we can help it. How can we strengthen memory?

I conceive that sometimes it is a good thing to *make an actual record* of God's mercy—literally to write it down in your pocket-book, so as to look at it another day. I am sure it is a proper thing to do, and often it will prove to be a very useful memento. I do not believe in keeping diaries and putting down every day what you feel, or what you think you feel but never did feel. I fear it would become a mere formality, or an exercise of imagination to most of us; for when I read very pious people's diaries they always seem to me to have had an eye to the people who would read them, and to have put down both more and less than the truth; I am a little frightened at the artificial style of experience which it must lead to. The fact is that we have not a great deal to put down every day if we lead an ordinary life; but there are days which ought to have a memorial. Days of sore trouble and of great deliverance, days of sharp temptation and of wonderful help: these must needs be chronicled. Some days of brilliant mercy are like seven days in one. There are days which seem like chips of heaven, fragments of eternity, stray days of delight which have broken loose from the days of heaven and wandered down to earth. Make a note of the favoured day. Put the event down in black and white just as it occurred. Never mind if nobody else ever reads it: *you* will read it one of these days; and thank God that it stands recorded for the strengthening of your faith. Therefore make a record. "I cannot express myself well in writing," says one. Well, you know, Jacob used to set up a stone and pour oil on the top of it; this was his way, though he knew little or nothing about pen and ink. You can invent some way surely by which you can remember choice favours. You can make a notch somewhere, a mark on an old tree, a line on the margin of the Bible over against the text that blessed you. You can put a scratch somewhere of which you shall say afterwards, "I know what that means. I did not want to forget the divine goodness, and there

is the record. Glory be to God, it comes fresh to my soul again as I look upon it."

Another help to memory is *to be sure to praise God thoroughly at the time you receive his goodness*. You will not forget it if, when it has come, your mind is in a suitable condition of gratitude; and, indeed, if you use the mercy at once to God's glory you will do better still. Days that are full of thanksgiving will be remembered, and those mercies around which we burned the incense of praise will leave their fragrance in the heart's secret chambers. Take care that if your memory is weak, you praise God while the mercy is newly born in your house.

Frequently it will help memory much to *set apart a little time for meditation*. A godly man and his wife were accustomed to take half-an-hour on Saturday evening to go over the mercies of the week: this is a good example. But, says one, "I could not spare so much time." No, no, I do not suppose you could, but you spare hours to grumble over the miseries of the week. Oh, yes, we talk freely when we get together about our pains and our losses, and about the bad times. They are very bad now, are they not? And you have all talked about them seven days a week for many a long week together. You have said fifty times, "I never saw such a season, there is no business, there is nothing stirring; there never was such stagnation." Now, as we all know all about that, and are pretty well agreed that it is true, could we not now go on to something else, and could not the time which we waste in telling out our troubles be spent in meditating on our mercies? Try if you cannot spare half-an-hour with your wife for such an exercise as I have mentioned, and I believe that you would never spend half an hour more happily and profitably. Say, "Come, wife, and help me; help my memory, and I will help yours. Let us remember what God has done for us this week": then go over your own story, and listen to her pleasant annotations. I do not hesitate to say that my life-story is as full of mercy as a honeycomb is full of sweetness when it drips with honey. How God has treated you I do not know, but he has indulged me with such love that if he will only let me get into a corner in heaven and praise him to all eternity, I will scarcely ask him for anything else but the opportunity to adore him: I mean to bless him whatever comes to me: I cannot help it. I have been so favoured of providence and grace that, if I were crushed in a mortar, I think every little bit and fragment of me would bless and praise his holy name, "for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever." This is my advice, and I have not given it you without having tried it myself—often meditate on what the Lord has done, and that will help your memory.

Then, again, *often rehearse his mercy in the ears of others*. I like to get with dear brethren who talk about God's lovingkindness, they are good company. I have noticed the difference between two farmers for instance. One of them never did have a good crop, though, to my knowledge, he had a "middling" one once, and that was at the time that he could hardly gather it, for it was too heavy for the reapers. But then it was a "middling" one. He has never made any money; I know he was a poor man when he began, and I know he has brought up a large family, and is rich now, but he never made any money—

never. Nobody ever does by farming, or by any other business, as you all know by common report. Well, I heard the grumbler's story, and I turned to another friend. This farmer says, "Well, it may not have been a very good year for wheat last year, but then there is a capital crop coming on to make up for it." Another year he said, "Well, I do not think the grain will pay, but the sheep are turning out uncommonly well." He has always something to say by way of honouring God's mercy. And is not that as it ought to be? He says, "Blessed be God, I have always had bread to eat and raiment to put on; I am a deal better off now than I thought I should be, and I have my portion to give to the work of the Lord, who has dealt so well with me." That is the way to talk, for it is truthful and it praises God, and it is the talk that God should hear from us. If you tell others your mercies you will not be so likely to forget them.

Sometimes it will help you to remember your mercies *if you use everything about you as a memento*. How can that be? Have you got a boy? Look at him and think of what mercy is bound up in that child: remember when he was little and sickly, and you prayed that he might live; when he met with an accident, and yet he was not killed, as he might have been; when he went out into life, and God kept him out of temptation; when you saw the first sign of piety; when you heard his first prayer; when you found that he was trying to be useful; when you heard his first address as he tried to speak to others about the Lord Jesus. I know the joy of such mercy, and I cannot hold my tongue when I think of it, for I am highly favoured; and I hope that you either have had the same blessing on your growing lads or will have it. Well, the boy will be a memento of God's mercy. Look at anybody's child and say, "I, also, was a child once," and then think of the mercies of God to you from childhood to the present time. Go into the street and meet a beggar. Should not that make you thank God that you are not forced to beg your bread, and wear rags, but are provided for? Turn down by Bethlehem hospital, and as you pass that institution thank God that you have not lost your reason. Look at the Blind School, and thank God that you have not lost your eyesight. Pass by the hospital, and thank God that you are not stretched upon a bed of agony, having lost a limb. Go into a churchyard, and thank God that you are yet alive. Reflect upon the judgment to come, and thank God that you are not in hell. Oh, my dear friends, everything ought to make us praise God, from the little birds that wake the morning to the twinkling stars that glad the night. Every breath of air, and drop of rain, and gleam of sunlight ought to refresh our memory and arouse us to praise the Lord.

That is the second point: we ought to do our best to assist our feeble memories.

III. Thirdly—and here I shall ask you to preach to yourselves—**WE HAVE ALL HAD MERCIES TO REMEMBER.**

I am going to include everybody in these remarks first, whether they are converted people or not.

We have all had *common mercies*. I have already hinted at them in speaking of those who are suffering from their loss. From our childhood until now we have had bread to eat and raiment to put on. Some

of us have enjoyed an abundance of common mercies; we have not had to live from hand to mouth, nor labour like slaves. Others who have had a harder lot should thank God that there has always been deliverance in the hour of need, bread has been given, and water has been sure. They have not always had what they might have liked, but there has been enough to keep them alive; and here they are in good health to prove it. Oh, to have your reason; to have the use of your limbs; to have your children about you! Even though you be poor, these are great blessings. Even these ordinary mercies should awaken your gratitude.

Then, in addition to common mercies, we have had those of *special providence*. Is there one person here who has not been at times favoured with remarkable interpositions of God's providence? Flavel used to say, "Those who notice providences will not be long without providences to notice." I think it is so. I could remember scores. If I had time to write them I could mention dozens of remarkable providences which have occurred to myself, some of which would not be believed by anybody else, and therefore shall not be told, but they are true for all that. There are matters known only to the Master and his unworthy servant for which I praise his name in my heart of hearts. Have you not had some such secrets between you and God: remarkable things, special things which, if you could write them, men would not believe them? Well, praise his name for the peculiar favours, but do not forget the more usual ones. Recollect what the Puritan said. He and his son had to ride some twenty miles each to meet each other, and when his son came in he said, "Father, I have had a most remarkable providence. My horse stumbled badly three times, and yet he did not fall." "I am grateful," said the old gentleman, "but I have had a remarkable providence, too, for my horse never stumbled all the way." We do not think of that. If there is a railway accident, and we just escape by the skin of our teeth, we say, "What a wonderful mercy!" Ought you not to be quite as grateful when you travel without an accident? Should you not see as much the hand of God in your perfect safety as in your rescue from danger? Remember the hourly providence of God which watches over you when you observe it not.

I should like to remind every unregenerate man here present of the *longsuffering mercy of God*. You have not loved him, but he has blessed you. You have sometimes spoken very sad things against his gospel, but he has not resented it. Possibly I speak to some who have even cursed his name, but he has not cursed *you*. You have defied him; and oh! it often seems to me to be a wonderful thing that a man should lift his hand to heaven and defy God, and that God remains quiet in pitying patience. Do you think that God—the infinite God—is going to be put into a passion by such a puny thing as you are? No, he has appointed a day in which he will settle these matters with you by his son Jesus Christ who will judge the quick and the dead. He will not stir himself out of his sublime compassion for you. But what a wonderful thing it is that he does not! Why there are thousands of men who, if we had done a hundred thousandth part as much evil towards them as we have done towards God.

would have fallen upon us with a word and a blow, or rather there would not have been any word, there would have been two blows ; and if it had been in their power to take our lives they would not have hesitated. Men could not have borne such provocation as sinners heap upon the Lord. You have provoked Jehovah to his face and thrust your finger into his eye. "Nay," say you, "how is that?" Why, when you mock religious people,—when you make jests and mirth about those who fear him you do this. Recollect that text, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of my eye." That is an irritating thing enough, is it not? and yet you have touched the apple of Jehovah's eye ; and instead of smiting you into nothingness in return, or sending you down to hell, he has still had mercy upon you. Let us gratefully remember this almighty patience, and bless his name, whoever we may be.

"Lord, and am I yet alive,
Not in torment, not in hell?
Still doth thy good Spirit strive—
With the chief of sinners dwell?
Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am, out of hell."

Furthermore, we should all praise God, or at any rate the most of us here, that we have enjoyed *gospel privileges*. If you have not believed in Jesus, yet you have heard of him. If you have rejected his grace, yet the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you. The door has been set open if you have not entered ; and the call of the gospel has been given though you have not accepted it. You are still on praying ground and pleading terms with God. You are still where you are wooed by a Saviour's love. Do thank God for this ! Do thank God that you are not living in the dark ages, or in a far-off heathen land where the saving name is not known ; but you are where the brazen serpent is lifted high, and the message comes to you—"Look and live." "To you is the word of this salvation sent."

Dear brethren, though I have thus spoken to everybody in the place, there is a special class to whom I must address myself. You, my brethren in Christ,—you have, above all others, ten thousand times ten thousand reasons for remembering the past and blessing the name of the Lord. Look back to the hole of the pit whence you were digged. Remember him who digged you thence. Look to the blood that bought you. Look to the Holy Spirit who renewed you. Look at the pardon which absolved you ; look to the grace that changed you ; look to the love that saved you ; look to the wisdom that has guided you ; look to the power that has upheld you. The life of a Christian should be unbroken gratitude, for it is a life of unceasing mercy. While others should praise God as creatures we must praise him as new creatures. They can praise him because he made them ; we must praise him because he hath "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Therefore, lift up your hearts and voices, beloved, and praise the Lord at the remembrance of his goodness.

IV. The last thing is to be this—that ALL OUR MEMORIES SHOULD TEND TO MAKE US PRAISE AND BLESS GOD. We can rest but a minute here.

Remember your mercies. Remember there is not one you have deserved. That bread which does not choke the sinner might justly do so, for he is an unworthy recipient of it. The earth which does not open to swallow you up must often wonder why it is not commissioned so to do, for you are so rebellious against God. We do not deserve the air we breathe, or the water we drink. Everything we have is sweetened with unspeakable mercy.

All the good that we enjoy comes from God. Recollect that! Alas, most men forget it. Rowland Hill used to say that worldlings were like the hogs under the oak, which eat the acorns, but never think of the oak from which they fell, nor lift up their heads to grunt out a thanksgiving. Yes, so it is. They munch the gift and murmur at the giver. Would God we did begin to remember that every good gift comes to us from the Divine hand, and that therefore the Lord is to be praised. We have received mercies at times, when, if we had not had them, the absence of them would have ended our lives, or would have involved us in misery worse than death. Do you not, some of you, remember now when you said in your soul, "O Lord, if thou dost but help me this time, I will praise thee as long as I live"? Yet, when you received the benefit you rendered no fit return. For the time you were grateful after a sort, but, as bread eaten is soon forgotten, so your remembrance of the mercy of God passed away. It ought not so to be.

I am now going to put a few questions to all present. First, *have you ever lived in gratitude?* Are you now living to God's praise? Are you now conscious of your obligations, and anxious to show that you feel them? If not—if not, I would like you to *feel how mean you are*. Does that offend you? I would like you to be offended with yourselves. What do you think of those who are ungrateful *to you* when you have been kind to them? Ah, you look upon them with indignation. Sometimes when I know that a man has been ungrateful to a friend of mine, very ungrateful, I cannot help looking upon him with contempt. If you have lived in this world for fifty years, and have never shown any gratitude to God in life, *feel mean*. Feel what a miserable wretch you are to be living wholly for yourself, while the God who has fed you and blessed you all your life long has not had the turn of a penny from you in the way of real praise and true gratitude. I say again, *feel mean*, and then go to Jesus' feet and tell him that you feel it, and cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." If you have never been a drunkard or a swearer, or unjust, think it bad enough to have been ungrateful. If you have lived without serving your God, think it sin enough to have made yourself as base as the dirt beneath your feet, and, at the thought of it, humble yourself before your gracious God.

Next if you are able to say "Through divine grace I have praised God, and I do desire to live entirely to his glory," yet, dear brother, *have you or I ever praised him enough? Have we ever praised him as we ought?* "Oh, no," say you, "and we never shall." And I agree with you: we never shall. The poet stretched words a little, but his meaning was right enough, when he said—

"But, oh, eternity's too short,
To utter all thy praise."

We must feel, we ought to feel, the happy burden of the Lord's praise to be too heavy for us. We confess that we cannot bless the Lord enough, either as to heartiness, frequency, or service. No human strength can praise God sufficiently, but still let us be doing something more for God than ever we have done. We sang just now, and we sang. I think, very fairly; but let us act as well as sing. Let us consecrate ourselves and our substance far more fully to God. What are you doing for God? What are you doing for my Lord Jesus? Have you a precious alabaster box at home which you would like to break, that you might pour the ointment on his head? Do it, and do it soon. Some are very choice about their alabaster boxes, and keep them under lock and key. They take their friends upstairs and show them their rare treasures. They ask them to visit their houses to see their alabaster boxes, and they even talk of what will be done with their choice things when their estate shall go through the Probate Court. That is what they are talking about, but as to actually pouring the costly perfume on the head of the Lord Jesus personally, in their own lifetime, it has not entered into their heads yet. God lead you to honour your Redeemer at once with the best you have. Give to God your best—your very best. Give God yourself: your all. He is worthy of it. And, oh, count it a high honour if he accepts it at your hands through Jesus Christ your Saviour.

Lastly, if anybody here says, "I would like to begin to remember the Lord's mercies, and to praise his name," then you must begin at the cross. The centre of everything that is good is the cross of Christ. No man begins a life of praise, or a life of prayer, or a life of holiness aright unless he begins within sight of the crucified Saviour, led there by the Holy Spirit. Go there with your ingratitude like a burden on your heart, and look to the flowing of the Redeemer's precious blood, and the load of ingratitude will roll into his sepulchre and will never be laid to your charge. And then when you get rid of the guilt you can begin—yea, you will begin—henceforward to praise him and magnify his name. God give you a memory capable of treasuring up his favours. May he enrich you with the benedictions of his covenant that you may have much to treasure up; and may the whole of the sweet canes and precious spices which memory has laid up be used as fuel for the flame of thanksgiving in life, and in death, and through eternity.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Chron., xvi. 1-36.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—130, 229, 720, and the DOXOLOGY.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LITTLE DOGS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 6TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."—Matthew xv. 26, 27.

"But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."—Mark vii. 27, 28.

I TAKE the two records of Matthew and Mark that we may have the whole matter before us. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditations thereon.

The brightest jewels are often found in the darkest places. Christ had not found such faith, no, not in Israel, as he discovered in this poor Canaanitish woman. The borders and fringes of the land were more fruitful than the centre, where the husbandry had been more abundant. In the headlands of the field, where the farmer does not expect to grow much beyond weeds, the Lord Jesus found the richest ear of corn that as yet had filled his sheaf. Let those of us who reap after him be encouraged to expect the same experience. Never let us speak of any district as too depraved to yield us converts, nor of any class of persons as too fallen to become believers. Let us go even to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, though the land be under a curse, for even there we shall discover some elect one, ordained to be a jewel for the Redeemer's crown. Our heavenly Father has children everywhere.

In spiritual things it is found that the best plants often grow in the most barren soil. Solomon spake of trees, and discoursed concerning the hyssop on the wall and the cedar in Lebanon. So is it in the natural world, the great trees are found on great mountains and the minor plants in places adapted for their tiny roots; but it is not so among the plants of the Lord's right hand planting, for there we have seen the cedar grow upon the wall—great saints in places where it was apparently impossible for them to exist; and we have seen hyssops

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growing upon Lebanon—a questionable, insignificant piety, where there have been innumerable advantages. The Lord is able to make strong faith exist with little knowledge, little present enjoyment and little encouragement; and strong faith in such conditions triumphs and conquers, and doubly glorifies the grace of God. Such was this Canaanitish woman, a cedar growing where soil was scant enough. She was a woman of amazing faith, though she could have heard but little of him in whom she believed, and perhaps had never seen his person at all until the day when she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, help me!”

Our Lord had a very quick eye for spying faith. If the jewel was lying in the mire his eye caught its glitter, if there was a choice ear of wheat among the thorns he failed not to perceive it. Faith has a strong attraction for the Lord Jesus; at the sight of it “the king is held in the galleries” and cries “thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.” The Lord Jesus was charmed with the fair jewel of this woman’s faith, and watching it and delighting in it he resolved to turn it round and set it in other lights, that the various facets of this priceless diamond might each one flash its brilliance and delight his soul. Therefore he tried her faith by his silence, and by his discouraging replies, that he might see its strength; but he was all the while delighting in it, and secretly sustaining it, and when he had sufficiently tried it, he brought it forth as gold, and set his own royal mark upon it in these memorable words, “O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”

I am hopeful this morning that perhaps some poor soul in this place under very discouraging circumstances may nevertheless be led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a strong and persevering faith, and though as yet it enjoys no peace, and has seen no gracious answer to prayer, I trust that its struggling faith may be strengthened this morning by the example of the Canaanitish woman.

I gather from the story of her appeal to the Lord Jesus and her success therein, four facts. The first is, *faith’s mouth cannot be closed*; the second is, *faith never disputes with God*; thirdly, I perceive that *faith argues mightily*; and fourthly, that *faith wins her suit*.

I. THE MOUTH OF FAITH CAN NEVER BE CLOSED; for if ever the faith of a woman was tried so as to make her cease from prayer, it was that of this daughter of Tyre. She had difficulty after difficulty to encounter, and yet she could not be put off from pleading for her little daughter, because she believed in Jesus as the great Messiah, able to heal all manner of diseases, and she meant to pray to him until he yielded to her importunity, for she was confident that he could chase the demon from her child.

Observe that *the mouth of faith cannot be closed even on account of the closed ear and the closed mouth of Christ*. He answered her never a word. She spoke very piteously, she came and threw herself at his feet, her child’s case was very urgent, her motherly heart was very tender, and her cries were very piercing, and yet he answered her never a word: as if he were deaf and dumb, he passed her by; yet was she not staggered; she believed in him, and even he himself could not make her doubt him, let him try silence even if he would. It is hard to believe when prayer seems to be a failure. I would to God that some poor seeker here might

believe that Jesus Christ is able and willing to save, and so fully believe it that his unanswered prayers shall not be able to make him doubt. Even if you should pray in vain by the month together, do not allow a doubt about the Lord Jesus and his power to save to cross your mind. What if you cannot yet grasp the peace which faith must ultimately bring you, what if you have no certainty of forgiveness of your sin, what if no gleams of joy should visit your spirit, yet believe you him, who cannot lie. "Though he slay me," said Job, "yet will I trust in him." That was splendid faith. It would be a great deal for some if they could say, "Though he smite me, yet will I trust him," but Job said, "Though he slay me." If he put on the garb of an executioner, and come out against me as though he would destroy me, yet will I believe him to be full of love: he is good and gracious still, I cannot doubt it, and therefore at his feet I will lie down and look up, expecting grace at his hands. Oh for such faith as this! O soul, if you have it, you are a saved man, as sure as you are alive. If even the Lord's apparent refusal to bless you cannot close your mouth, your faith is of a noble sort, and salvation is yours.

In the next place, *her faith could not be silenced by the conduct of the disciples*. They did not treat her well, but yet perhaps not altogether ill. They were not like their Master, but frequently repulsed those who would come to him. Her noise annoyed them, she kept to them with boundless perseverance, and therefore they said, "Send her away, for she crieth *after us*." Poor soul, she never cried *after them*, it was *after their Master*. Sometimes disciples become very important in their own eyes, and think that the pushing and crowding to hear the gospel is caused by the people's eagerness to hear *them*, whereas nobody would care for their poor talk if it were not for the gospel message which they are charged to deliver. Give us any other theme, and the multitude would soon melt away. Though weary of the woman's importunate cries, they acted somewhat kindly towards her, for they were evidently desirous that she should obtain the boon she sought, or else our Lord's reply would not have been appropriate, "I am not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was not her daughter's healing that they cared for, but they consulted their own comfort, for they were anxious to be rid of her. "Send her away," said they, "for she crieth *after us*." Still, though they did not treat her as men should treat a woman, as disciples should treat a seeker, as Christians should treat everybody, yet for all that, her mouth was not stopped. Peter, I have no doubt, looked in a very scowling manner, and perhaps even John became a little impatient, for he had a quick temper by nature; Andrew and Philip and the rest of them considered her very impertinent and presumptuous; but she thought of her little daughter at home, and of the horrible miseries to which the demon subjected her, and so she pressed up to the Saviour's feet and said, "Lord, help me." Cold, hard words and unkind, unsympathetic behaviour could not prevent her pleading with him in whom she believed. Ah, poor sinner, perhaps you are saying, "I am longing to be saved, but such and such a good Christian man has dealt very bitterly with me, he has doubted my sincerity and questioned the reality of my repentance, and caused me the deepest sorrow; it seems as if he did not wish me to be saved." Ah, dear friend, this is very

trying, but if you have true faith in the Master you will not mind us disciples, neither the gentlest of us, nor the most crooked of us, but just urge on your suit with your Lord till he deigns to give you an answer of peace.

Her mouth, again, was not closed by exclusive doctrine, which appeared to confine the blessing to a favoured few: the Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and though properly understood there is nothing very severe in it, yet the sentence must have fallen on the woman's heart like a talent of lead. "Alas," she might have thought, "then he is not sent to me; vainly do I seek for that which he reserves for the Jews." Now, the doctrine of election, which is assuredly taught in Scripture, ought not to hinder any soul from coming to Christ, for, if properly understood, it would rather encourage than discourage; and yet often to the uninstructed ear the doctrine of the divine choice of a people from before the foundation of world acts with very depressing effect. We have known poor seekers mournfully say, "Perhaps there is no mercy for me; I may be among those for whom no purpose of mercy has been formed." They have been tempted to cease from prayer for fear they should not have been predestinated unto eternal life. Ah, dear soul, if you have the faith of God's elect in you, you will not be kept back by any self-condemning inferences drawn from the secret things of God, but you will believe in that which has been clearly revealed, and you will be assured that this cannot contradict the secret decrees of heaven. What though our Lord was only sent to the house of Israel, yet there is a house of Israel not after the flesh but after the spirit, and therefore the Syrophenecian woman was included even where she thought she was shut out, and you may also be comprehended within those lines of gracious destiny which now distress you. At any rate, say to yourself, "In the election of grace others are included who were as sinful as I have been, why should not I? Others have been included who were as full of distress as I have been on account of sin, and why should not I be also?" Reasoning thus you will press forward; in hope believing against hope, suffering no plausible deduction from the doctrine of Scripture to prevent your believing in the appointed Redeemer.

The mouth of faith in this case was not even closed by a sense of admitted unworthiness. Christ spoke of dogs: he meant that the Gentiles were to Israel as the dogs: she did not at all dispute it, but yielded the point by saying, "Truth, Lord." She felt she was only worthy to be compared to a dog. I have no doubt her sense of unworthiness was very deep. She did not expect to win the boon she sought for on account of any merit of her own; she depended upon the goodness of Christ's heart, not on the goodness of her cause, and upon the excellence of his power rather than upon the prevalence of her plea; yet conscious as she was that she was only a poor Gentile dog, her prayers were not hindered; she cried, notwithstanding all, "Lord, help me." O sinner, if thou feelest thyself to be the worst sinner out of hell, still pray, believingly pray for mercy. If thy sense of unworthiness be enough to drive thee to self-destruction, yet I beseech thee, out of the depths, out of the dungeon of self-loathing, still cry unto God; for thy salvation rests in no measure or degree upon thyself, or upon anything that thou

art or hast been or canst be. Thou needest to be saved *from* thyself, not *by* thyself. It is thine to be empty that Jesus may fill thee ; thine to confess thy filthiness that he may wash thee ; thine to be less than nothing that Jesus may be everything to thee. Suffer not the number, blackness, frequency, or heinousness of thy transgressions to silence thy prayers, but though thou be a dog, yea not worthy to be set with the dogs of the Lord's flock, yet open thy mouth in believing prayer.

There was beside this a general tone and spirit in what the Lord Jesus said which tended to depress the woman's hope and restrain her prayer, yet *she was not kept back by the darkest and most depressing influences*. "It is not meet," said the Lord Jesus, "it is not becoming, it is not proper, it is hardly lawful, to take children's bread and throw it to dogs." Perhaps she did not quite see all that he might have meant, but what she did see was enough to pour cold water upon the flame of her hope, yet her faith was not quenched. It was a faith of that immortal kind which nothing can kill ; for her mind was made up that whatever Jesus meant, or did not mean, she would not cease to trust him, and urge her suit with him. There are a great many things in and around the gospel which men see as in a haze, and being misunderstood they rather repel than attract seeking souls ; but be they what they may we must resolve to come to Jesus at all risks. "If I perish, I perish." Beside the great stumbling-stone of election there are truths and facts which seekers magnify and misconstrue till they see a thousand difficulties. They are troubled about Christian experience, about being born again, about inbred sin, and all sorts of things ; in fact, a thousand lions are in the way when the soul attempts to come to Jesus, but he who gives Christ the faith which he deserves says, "I fear none of these things. Lord, help me, and I will still confide in thee. I will approach thee, I will press through obstacles to thee, and throw myself at thy dear feet, knowing that him that cometh to thee thou wilt in no wise cast out."

II. FAITH NEVER DISPUTES WITH THE LORD. Faith worships. You notice how Matthew says, "Then came she and worshipped him." Faith also begs and prays. You observe how Mark says, "She besought him." She cried, "Lord, help me," after having said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David." Faith pleads, but never disputes, not even against the hardest thing that Jesus says. If faith disputed—I am uttering a solecism—she would not be faith, for that which disputes is unbelief. Faith in God implies agreement with what God says, and consequently it excludes the idea of doubt. Genuine faith believes anything and everything the Lord says whether discouraging or encouraging. She never has a "but" or an "if," or even a "yet" to put in, but she stands to it, "Thou hast said it, Lord, and therefore it is true : thou hast ordained it Lord, and therefore it is right." She never goes beyond that.

Observe in our text that *faith assents to all the Lord says*. She said, "Truth, Lord." What had he said ? "You are comparable to a dog !" "Truth, Lord ; truth, Lord ; so I am." "It would not be meet that the children should be robbed of bread in order to feed dogs." "Truth Lord, it would not be fitting, and I would not have one of thy children deprived of grace for me." "It is not your time

yet," said Jesus ; " the children must *first* be fed ; children at the meal times and dogs after dinner ; this is Israel's time, and the Gentiles may follow after. But not yet." She virtually replies, " I know it, Lord, and agree thereto."

She does not raise a question or dispute the justice of the Lord's dispensing his own grace according to his sovereign good pleasure. She fails not, as some do who cavil at divine sovereignty. It would have proved that she had little or no faith if she had done that. She disputes not as to the Lord's set time and order. Jesus said, " Let the children first be filled," and she does not dispute the time, as many do, who will not have it that now is the accepted time, but are as much for postponing as this woman was for antedating the day of grace. She entered into no argument against its being improper to take the covenant bread from the children and give it to the uncircumcised heathen : she never wished Israel to be robbed for her. Dog as she was she would not have any purpose of God nor any propriety of the divine household shifted and changed for her. She assented to all the Lord's appointments. That is the faith which saves the soul, which agrees with the mind of God, even if it seem adverse to herself, which believes the revealed declarations of God whether they appear to be pleasant or terrible, and assents to God's word whether it be like a balm to its wound or like a sword to cut and slay. If the word of God be true, O man, do not fight against it, but bow before it. It is not the way to a living faith in Jesus Christ, nor to obtain peace with God, to take up arms against anything which God declares. In yielding lies safety. Say " Truth, Lord," and you shall find salvation.

Note, that she not only assented to all that the Lord said, but *she worshipped him in it*. " Truth," she said, " but yet thou art my Lord." " Thou callest me 'dog,' but thou art my Lord for all that : thou accountest me unworthy to receive thy bounties, but thou art my Lord, and I still own thee as such." She is of the mind of Job : " Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil ?" She is willing to take the evil and say, " Whether the Lord gives, or whether he refuses, blessed be his name ; he is my Lord still." Oh, this is grand faith, which has thrown aside the disputations spirit, and not only assents to the Lord's will, but worships him in it. Let it be what it may, O Lord, even if the truth condemns me, yet still thou art Lord, and I confess thy deity, confess thine excellence, own thy crown rights, and submit myself to thee : do with me what thou wilt."

And, you observe, when she said " Truth, Lord," *she did not go on to suggest that any alteration should be made for her*. " Lord," she said, " thou hast classed me among the dogs : " she does not say, " Put me among the children," but she only asks to be treated as a dog is. " The dogs eat the crumbs," says she. She does not want a purpose altered nor an ordinance changed, nor a decree removed : " Let it be as it is : if it be thy will, Lord, it is my will " ; only she spies a gleam of hope, where, if she had not possessed faith, she would have seen only the blackness of despair. May we have such a faith as hers, and never enter into controversy with God.

III. Now I come to an interesting part of our subject, namely, that FAITH ARGUES, though it does not dispute. " Truth, Lord," said she,

"yet the dogs eat the crumbs." This woman's argument was correct, and strictly logical throughout. It was an argument based upon the Lord's own premises, and you know if you are reasoning with a man you cannot do better than take his own statements and argue upon them. She does not proceed to lay down new premises, or dispute the old ones by saying "I am no dog;" but she says, "Yes, I am a dog." She accepts that statement of the Lord, and uses it as a blessed *argumentum ad hominem*, such as was never excelled in this world. She took the words out of his own mouth, and vanquished him with them, even as Jacob overcame the angel. There is so much force in the woman's argument, that I quite despair this morning of being able to set it all forth to you. I would, however, remark that the translators have greatly injured the text by putting in the word "yet," for there is no "yet" in the Greek: it is quite another word. Jesus said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." "No," said she, "it would not be meet to do this, because the dogs are provided for, for the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. It would be very improper to give them the children's bread, because they have bread of their own. Truth, Lord, I admit it would be improper to give the dogs the children's bread, because they have already their share when they eat the crumbs which fall from the children's table. That is all they want, and all I desire. I do not ask thee to give me the children's bread, I only ask for the dog's crumbs."

Let us see the force of her reasoning, which will appear in many ways. The first is this. *She argued with Christ from her hopeful position.* "I am a dog," said she, "but, Lord, thou hast come all the way to Sidon; here thou art close on the borders of my country, and therefore I am not like a dog out in the street; I am a dog under the table." Mark tells us that she said, "The dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." She as good as says, "Lord, thou seest my position: I was a dog in the street, afar off from thee, but now thou hast come and preached in our borders, and I have been privileged to listen to thee. Others have been healed, and thou art in this very house doing deeds of grace while I look on, and therefore, though I am a dog, I am a dog under the table; therefore, Lord, let me have the crumbs." Do you see, dear hearer? You admit that you are a sinner, and a great sinner, but you say, "Lord, I am a sinner that is permitted to hear the gospel, therefore bless it to me. I am a dog, but I am under the table, deal with me as such. When there is a sermon preached for the comfort of thy people, I am there to hear it: whenever the saints gather together, and the precious promises are discussed, and they rejoice therein, I am there, looking up, and wishing that I were among them, but still Lord, since thou hast had the grace to let me be a hearer of the gospel, wilt thou reject me now that I desire to be a receiver of it? To what end and purpose hast thou brought me so near, or rather come so near to me, if after all thou wilt reject me? Dog I am, but still I am a dog under the table. It is a favour to be privileged to be among the children, even if I may only lie at their feet. I pray thee, good Lord, then, since now I am permitted to look up to thee and ask this blessing, do not reject me." To me it seems that this was a strong point with the woman, and that she used it well.

Her next plea was *her encouraging relationship*. "Truth, Lord," she says, "I am a dog, but the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from *their master's table*." See the stress laid there by Matthew: "From their master's table." "I cannot say that thou art my Father, I cannot look up and claim the privilege of a child, but thou art my Master, and masters feed their dogs; they give at least the crumbs to those dogs which own them as their lord." The plea is very like that suggested to the mind of the poor returning prodigal. He thought to say to his father, "Make me as one of thy hired servants": only his faith was far weaker than hers. "Lord, if I do not stand in relation to thee as a child, yet I am thy creature; thou hast made me, and I look up to thee and beseech thee not to let me perish: if I have no other hold upon thee I have at least this, that I ought to have served thee, and therefore I am thy servant though I am a runaway. I do belong to thee at least under the covenant of works if I do not under the covenant of grace, and oh, since I am thy servant, do not utterly reject me. Thou hast some property in me by creation, at any rate; oh, look upon me, and bless me. The dogs eat what falls from their master's table, let me do the same." She spics out a dog's relation to its master, and makes the most of it with blessed ingenuity, which we shall do well to imitate.

Notice next, she pleads *her association with the children*. Here I must tell you that it is a pity that it was not, I suppose, possible for our translators to bring clearly out what is after all the pith of the passage. She was pleading for her *little* daughter; and our Lord said to her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the *little* dogs." The word is a diminutive, and the woman pitched upon it. The word "dogs" could not have served her turn one half as well as that of "little dogs," but she said, "Truth, Lord, yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs." In the East, as a rule, a dog is not allowed indoors; in fact, dogs are there looked upon as foul creatures, and roam about uncared for and half wild. Christianity has raised the dog, and made him man's companion, as it will raise all the brute creation, till the outrages of vivisection, and the cruelties of the vulgar, will be things unheard of except as horrors of a past barbarous age. In the East a dog is far down in the scale of life, a street wanderer, prowling for scanty food, and in temper little better than a reformed wolf. So the adult Easterns do not associate with dogs, having a prejudice against them, but children are not so foolish, and consequently the eastern children associate with the little dogs. The father will not have the dog near him, but his child knows no such folly, and seeks out a little dog to join him in his sports; thus the little dog comes to be under the table, tolerated in the house for the child's sake. The woman appears to me to argue thus—"Thou hast called me and my daughter whelps, little dogs, but then the little dogs are under the children's table; they associate with the children, even as I have been with thy disciples to-day. If I am not one of them, I have been associating with them, and would be glad to be among them." How heartily do I wish that some poor soul would catch at this and say, "Lord, I cannot claim to be one of thy children, but I love to sit among them, for I am never happier than when I am with them. Sometimes they trouble and distress me, as little children

pinch and hurt their little dogs, but oftentimes they caress me, and speak kindly and comfortably to me, and pray for me, and desire my salvation ; so Lord, if I am not a child, yet thou callest me a little dog ; so I am, but give me a little dog's treatment, give me the crumb of mercy which I seek."

His argument goes further, for *the little dog eats the crumbs of the children's bread with the child's full consent*. When a child has its little dog to play with while he is eating, what does the child do ? Why, of course, it gives a little bit to the dog every now and again, and the doggie himself takes great liberties and helps himself as much as he dars. When a little dog is with the children at meal time it is sure to get a crumb from one or other of its playmates ; and none will object to its eating what it can get. So the woman seems to say, " Lord, there are the children, thy disciples ; they do not treat me very well ; little children do not treat little dogs always so kindly as they might ; but still, Lord, they are quite willing that I should have the blessing I am seeking. They have a full portion in thee ; they have thy presence : they have thy word : they sit at thy feet ; they have obtained all sorts of spiritual blessings : I am sure they cannot grudge me so much less a boon ; they are willing that I should have the devil cast out of my daughter, for that blessing compared with what they have is but a crumb, and they are content that I should have it. So Lord, I answer thine argument. Thou sayest it is not meet until the children are filled to give bread to dogs, but, Lord, the children are filled and are quite willing to let me have my portion, they consent to allow me the crumbs ; wilt thou not give them to me ?

I think there was another point of force in her plea : it was this, *the abundance of the provision*. She had a great faith in Christ, and believed big things of him, and therefore she said, " Lord, there is no great strength in thine argument if thou dost intend to prove that I ought not to have the bread for fear there should not be enough for the children, for thou hast so much that even while the children are being fed the dogs may get the crumbs, and there will be enough for the children still." Where it is a poor man's table, and he cannot afford to lose a crumb, dogs should not be allowed ; but when it is a king's table where bread is of small account, and the children are sitting and feeding to the full, the little dogs may be permitted to feed under the table for the mere droppings,—not the bread the master *casts* down, but the crumbs which *fall* by accident are so many that there is enough for the dogs without the children being deprived of a mouthful. " No, Lord," said she, " I would not have thee take away the bread from thine own children, God forbid that such a deed should be done for me ; but there is enough for thy children in thine overflowing love and mercy, and still enough for me, for all I ask is but a crumb compared with what thou art daily bestowing upon others."

Now, here is the last point in which her argument had force. *She looked at things from Christ's point of view*. " If, great Lord," said she, " thou lookest at me as a dog, then behold I humbly take thee at thy word, and plead that if I be a dog to thee then the cure I ask for my daughter is but a crumb for thy great power and goodness to bestow on me." She used a diminutive word too, and said, " A little crumb."

The little dogs eat of the little crumbs which fall from the children's table. What bold faith this was ! She valued the mercy she sought beyond all price ; she thought it worth ten thousand worlds to her, but yet to the Son of God she knew it to be a mere crumb, so rich is he in power to heal and so full of goodness and blessing. If a man give a crumb to a dog he has a little the less, but if Jesus gives mercy to the greatest of sinners he has none the less, he is just as rich in condescension and mercy and power to forgive as he was before. The woman's argument was most potent. She was as wise as she was earnest, and, best of all, she believed most marvellously.

I shall close this outline of the argument by saying that at bottom the woman was, in reality, arguing according to the eternal purpose of God ; for what was the Lord's grand design in giving the bread to the children, or, in other words, sending a divine revelation to Israel ? Why, it always was his purpose that through the children the dogs should get the bread ; that through Israel the gospel should be handed to the Gentiles. It had always been his plan to bless his own heritage that his way might be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations ; and this woman somehow or other, by a divine instinct, fell into the divine method. Though she had not spied out the secret, or at least it is not told us that she did so in so many words, yet there was the innate force of her argument. In other words, it ran thus—" It is through the children that the dogs have to be fed : Lord, I do not ask thee to cease giving the children their bread ; nor do I even ask thee to hurry on the children's meal ; let them be fed first, but even while they are eating let me have the crumbs which drop from their well-filled hands, and I will be content." There is a brave argument for you, poor coming sinner. I leave it in your hands, and pray the Spirit of God to help you to use it, and if you can turn it to good account you shall prevail with the Lord this day.

IV. Our last and closing head is this : FAITH WINS HER SUIT. This woman's faith first *won a commendation for itself*. Jesus said, " O, woman, great is thy faith." She had not heard of the prophecies concerning Jesus ; she was not bred and born and educated in a way in which she was likely to become a believer, and yet did become a believer of the first class. It was marvellous that it should be so, but grace delights in doing wonders. She had not seen the Lord before in her life, she was not like those who had associated with him for many months : and yet, with but one view of him, she gained this great faith. It was astonishing, but the grace of God is always astonishing. Perhaps she had never seen a miracle : all that her faith had to rest upon was that she had heard in her own country that the Messiah of the Jews was come, and she believed that the Man of Nazareth was he, and on this she relied. O brethren, with all our advantages, with the opportunities that we have of knowing the whole life of Christ, and understanding the doctrines of the gospel as they are revealed to us in the New Testament, with many years of observation and experience, our faith ought to be much stronger than it is. Does not this poor woman shame us when we see her with her slender opportunities nevertheless so strong in faith, so that Jesus himself commending her says, " O woman, great is thy faith."

But her faith prevailed further, that it *won a commendation for the mode of its action*, for, according to Mark, Jesus said, "Go thy way; for *this saying* the devil is gone out of thy daughter;" as if he rewarded the saying as well as the faith which suggested it. He was so delighted with the wise, and prudent, and humble yet courageous manner in which she turned his words against himself, that he said, "For this saying the devil is gone out of thy daughter." The Lord who commends faith afterwards commends the fruits and acts of faith. The tree consecrates the fruit. No man's actions can be acceptable with God till he himself is accepted, but the woman having been accepted on her faith, the results of her faith were agreeable to the heart of Jesus.

The woman also *gained her desire*: "The devil is gone out of thy daughter," and he was gone at once. She had only to go home and find her daughter on the bed taking a quiet rest, which she had not done since the demon had possessed her. Our Lord, when he gave her the desire of her heart gave it in a grand manner, he gave her a sort of *carte blanche*, and said, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." I do not know that any other person ever had such a word said to him as this woman, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." It was as if the Lord of glory surrendered at discretion to the conquering arms of a woman's faith. The Lord grant to you and me in all times of our struggling to be able thus by faith still to conquer, and we cannot imagine how great will be the spoil which we shall divide when the Lord shall say, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

The close of all is this: this woman is a lesson to all outsiders, to you who think yourselves beyond the pale of hope, to you who were not brought up to attend the house of God, who perhaps have been negligent of all religion for almost all your lifetime. This poor woman is a Sidonian; she comes of a race that had been condemned to die many centuries before, one of the accursed seed of Canaan, and yet for all that she became great in the kingdom of heaven because she believed, and there is no reason why those who are reckoned to be quite outside the church of God should not be in the very centre of it, and be the most burning and shining lights of the whole. O you poor outcasts and far off ones, take heart and comfort, and come to Jesus Christ and trust yourselves in his hands.

This woman is next of all an example to those who think they have been repulsed in their endeavours after salvation. Have you been praying, and have you not succeeded? Have you sought the Lord, and do you seem to be more unhappy than ever? Have you made attempts at reformation and amendment, and believed that you made them in the divine strength, and have they failed? Yet trust in him whose blood has not lost its efficacy, whose promise has not lost its truth, and whose arm has not lost its power to save. Cling to the cross, sinner. If the earth sink beneath thee, cling on; if storms should rage, and all the floods be out, and even God himself seem to be against thee, cling to the cross. There is thy hope. Thou canst not perish there.

This is a lesson, next, to every intercessor. This woman was not pleading for herself, she was asking for another. Oh, when you plead for a fellow sinner do not do it in a cold-hearted manner; plead as for

your own soul and your own life. That man will prevail with God as an intercessor who solemnly bears the matter upon his own heart and makes it his own, and with tears entreats an answer of peace.

Lastly, recollect that this mighty woman, this glorious woman, is a lesson to every mother, for she was pleading for her little daughter. Maternal instinct makes the weakest strong, and the most timid brave. Even among poor beasts and birds, how powerful is a mother's love. Why, the poor little robin which would be frightened at the approach of a footstep, will sit upon its nest when the intruder comes near when her little ones are in danger. A mother's love makes her heroic for her child; and so when you are pleading with God plead as a mother's love suggests to you, till the Lord shall say to you also, "O woman, great is thy faith; the devil is gone out of thy daughter; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." I leave that last thought with parents as an encouragement to pray. The Lord stir you up to it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xv. 1—31.

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THE BLIND BEFRIENDED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 9TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON,

"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."—Isaiah xlii. 16.

THIS promise is not made to every blind man, or to all sorts of blind people, for there are some blind people whom God does not lead. There is only a peculiar sort of blind people to whom this promise is given, that he will guide them and not forsake them. If you go outside the Tabernacle, take the first turning on the left, and walk down what is called the St. George's Road till you come to the end, you may see asylums built for three sorts of blind people. On your right hand you will have the Blind School. That is for the physically blind, who have lost the sight of these outward eyes. On the left hand you will see the Bethlehem Hospital. That is for the mentally blind, who have lost the inner sight, and are in the more unhappy state of lunacy. Then straight before you you will see the St. George's Roman Catholic Cathedral. That is for the spiritually blind, whose case is all the more pitiable, because these blind people have blind leaders, and their deluded souls are prescribed for by physicians who foster their delusions. Now, the promise of divine guidance is not addressed to any of these. It is not necessarily given to the physically blind; for, alas, some of them, in addition to their loss of natural sight, are without a sight of Christ. Nor is it given to the mentally blind, for some of them, before they lost their reason, had made ill use of it, and had despised the Saviour. Neither is it made to the spiritually blind, for strong delusion is upon them that they should believe a lie, and, alas, they wander in the light as in the darkness, and grope like the blind at noon day. There is, however, a fourth kind of blindness, which you who are genuine Christians will attribute to yourselves. A painful experience has made it clear to you. The promise is made to the confessedly, the consciously

blind ; and I shall try to show that this fitly describes every Christian man. Every believer in Christ is made a witness of that "judgment for which Christ came into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." John ix. 39. It is to him, and to such as him, that the Lord hath said, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not : I will lead them in paths that they have not known."

I. Our first enquiry shall be, WHO ARE THEY? Who are these blind people?

We have already said, they are *consciously blind people*; and they confess that once on a time they were totally blind. Years gone by, before they knew the Saviour, they knew nothing aright. Before the light from heaven shone upon them they were in the gross darkness of their natural state. Now, it is not every man that knows that he is by nature in the dark; and when he does know it he becomes one of the blind to whom the Lord makes this promise. The Pharisees in Christ's day were as blind as bats; but they said, "We see." "Therefore," said he, "your sin remaineth." They were the very people whom it was hard to save, because they were seeing people in their own estimation; but the man who has been converted knows now that there was no light in him by nature, that he did not understand anything aright, that he put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, darkness for light, and light for darkness. He knows that in him—that is in his flesh—there was no good thing, but all manner of corruptions, tendencies towards evil, envyings of mankind, and hatred of God. Soul, have you ever seen your own darkness? Have you ever seen that nature's light is nothing better than midnight? Have you ever been made to see that, as it were, through Adam's fall, you were plunged into the state of the blind, and could not possibly find your way? Well, if you are of that sort, the promise is made to you.

These blind people knowing their infirmity and feeling their privation, recognise that *what they thought was sight before was all delusion*. Ah, there was a time with me when I thought I was righteous, and as I looked upon myself I saw fair white linen upon my loins; but now I know that it was my blindness that made me think I was fully dressed when I was naked. I thought I had much goods and many treasures, and I used to go from casket to casket to inspect my jewels. I would fain persuade myself that I was rich; but now I see that I was in the delirium of sin, and therefore flattered myself that I was rich when I was poor. I thought then, too, that I was happy. There was a mirth and a frothy joy which I thought well worth the having; but now I call that joy misery which is sinful, and that mirth to be wretchedness which is apart from God.

Now our eyes are open to see that we did not see, and to discover that it was all dark, and yet we thought it light. Phantoms passed before us—mere shapes of things that were not; but we counted these to be substantial realities. Dear hearer, have you discovered that those bright eyes of yours which you used to possess, which made you see such righteousness in yourself, and such pleasure in sin, were, after all, blind eyes, and that you did not see at all, but were duped and deluded, and under the witchcraft of Satan, fascinated by the world, and beguiled

by your own corrupt heart? Well, if it be so, you are one of those blind people who confess their blindness, to whom the promise is most graciously made.

But I think I hear you say, "You are telling us rather of a blindness that we used to be afflicted with than of one from which we are now suffering." Well, the figure will not run on all fours. We must use it, however, to set forth *the present truth*; and this is as it ought to be used. Surely, the description "blind" may well be applied to the Christian, for this reason—that *now he does not expect to see that upon which he builds his hope*. All that he sees is nothing to him. That which is to him substantial and real is that which he believes. If you ask any believer what he rests his hope upon, he will tell you that it is upon an unseen Christ, "whom having not seen we love." He will tell you that there is a promise, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;" and he has realised the sweetness of that word. He does not rest his confidence on a crucifix which he can see with his eyes, but on the Saviour who is not here, for he is risen and ascended into heaven. He does not rest upon a priest whose voice he can hear—a man like himself; but his confidence is in another priest who has gone within the veil, and entered into the glory. He depends no longer now upon his own doings. These he can see, but what he sees of them makes him despond. He dares not rest in his own works, but he rests in the works of another who has gone up to the throne of God, and carried a matchless righteousness into Jehovah's presence. He will tell you that he does not even depend upon his own feelings; he is very conscious that they are fickle—they change like the weather. As one day we have a little bright sunshine, and perhaps in an hour we have a hailstorm, and by-and-by are brought back to the very cold of winter, so is it with our feelings. Our experience is always varying, and the man that knows himself aright dares not trust in his feelings, nor rely upon his experience. No, he rests in the feelings of him who sweat-great drops of blood in the garden. His confidence is in the anguish of one who was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and not in his own anguish. He rests in the death and resurrection—in the wounds and in the triumphs—not of himself, in any respect, but of Christ whom, having not seen, he nevertheless trusts and relies upon. Oh, it is a blessed thing to be thus blind, so that you cannot see any good in yourself, cannot see any good upon which you could rest; cannot discover, even in God's work, apart from Christ, any foundation on which to build; cannot find in heaven or earth any prop and pillar for the soul, save Jesus crucified. Ransack the universe, and where others can see grounds of confidence these truly blind men are unable to see anything, and only say, "These we count dross and dung that we may win Christ and be found in him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith." Oh, blessed blindness, never more to be able to see a solitary ray of hope except in Christ—never more to be able to find any confidence anywhere but in him whom God the Father hath set forth to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in his precious blood!

Moreover, besides this, these blind people are *content not to see a great many things*. He that is blind, in the blessed sense, knows that there are many things which he cannot see, and does not want to foresee.

For instance, he cannot see into the future. He leaves others to say, "To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and will buy and sell and get gain." But this man is so wisely blind that he cannot presume to peer into the morrow. He has been told to leave to-morrow with God, for "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." I know some of the Lord's people who look so far forward that they see a great deal too much for their own peace of mind. They catch a glimpse of trouble ahead, and yet that trouble will never come. Some of them espy dreadful disasters which never happen. I have known some good old people who were afraid that they should have to spend their last shilling, and yet they left ample stores behind when they went home. I have known some who were afraid that they should live so long that they would be a nuisance to their friends, and yet their friends bewailed them when they at last fell asleep. I have known a Christian man dread what would happen *if*—and that "if" was entirely his own conjuring up. Some are afraid to die, and they feel a thousand deaths in fearing one. There will be no terrors to them in death. There was one who used to be always in bondage through fear of death, but he died in his sleep, and it would have been a good thing for him if he had been so blind that he could not see the thing he dreaded. Oh, it is a happy thing not to be able to see the trouble which if wisely appointed is as wisely concealed, but to leave it all with God. You have enough to do to fight the battles of to-day. Permit me to repeat a figure which I have often used before. When Leonidas and the Spartans went into the narrow pass of Thermopylæ, where their enemies could only come up one or two at a time, they kept the whole Persian host at bay; but when afterwards they gave up in despair, and rushed into the plain to fight the Persians, they soon fell. Now, if you will stand in the narrow pass of to-day, and just meet your troubles as they come, single-handed, in the name of God Almighty, who is your defender, you will be sufficient for the evil, as the evil will be sufficient for the day. But if you get meddling with all the troubles that may come to pass between now and twelve months' hence; why you will soon compass yourselves about with perplexities and plunge yourselves into dismay. You had better let them alone. Be blind to the future. Be happily blind, and plead the promise, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not."

There are some other things, too, that these blind people know they could not see. They are quite aware that if they open their eyes never so wide they will never see clearly all the *arcana*, the profound mysteries of God's covenant. I know men who are wise in their own eyes, and very well assured of their own intellects, who, while palpably ignorant of everything that is rational, are conscious that they know everything that is spiritual. Their acquaintance with theology is thoroughly exhaustive; they have learned long ago to count five, to reckon them at their fingers ends,—one, two, three, four, five. These mystic figures comprise all the doctrines of the gospel. They know them, and they double up their fists at the mention of any of those five points, and they are ready to fight anybody about them. They are men of a great deal of wisdom,—seeing men; but I think a man that gets a little nearer to God discovers that he does not know everything; and he is quite clear that he can no more compass the whole of divine truth, than he can hold the

ocean in the hollow of his hand. I have long felt that I shall never understand where the two great truths of free agency and predestination meet. I believe them both—believe them with equal faith ; but how to reconcile them I no longer wish to know, because I do not think that God intends we should know. Oh, brethren, there is such a thing as prying where you ought to be believing, such a thing as for ever cavilling, and wanting to see, where your faith has to acquiesce in being led blindfold. And who would not wish to be blind, if the blind man's privilege is to be led by God ? Who is not willing not to see, if, instead of seeing, which will always be fallible, there shall come guidance from God, which is constantly infallible.

Thus, you see, I have attempted to describe these blind people. I have not given a full description of them ; but I hope there are some of them here—people that feel their own weakness, their own want of knowledge, their own nothingness, people that are willing to be led, willing to be guided, people that cannot see everything, and do not expect to see everything, but are willing to walk by faith in the unseen God, and to trust Jehovah where they cannot trace his footsteps.

II. Now let us consider THE PROMISE THAT IS MADE TO THEM. What shall be done for them ?

Well, they have this pact of heaven for their solace—"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not : I will lead them in paths that they have not known." Do you catch the idea ? Do you discern the sense of this gracious undertaking ? If so you must be wonderfully struck with the condescending goodness of the Lord in that he offers to lead blind men. Certainly it is not an office generally sought. It is not one supposed to be attended with any great honour ; but it is a very kindly office, and one which any Christian man may be right glad to render to his afflicted friend. But only think of God himself coming and guiding the blind—leading his blind children. "I will bring them," saith he ; "I will guide them." So our first thought is that *God himself will be the guide of his people when they feel their blindness*. He will not leave you to stumble and to grope your way, nor will he bid you depend upon your fellow Christian, who is as blind as yourself, but he will be your guide. Think of it. Omniscience shall bow itself to instruct your ignorance. Infinite power shall stoop that you may lean upon its shoulder. Boundless love shall deign without any degradation to take you by the hand and pick your pathway for you, and infinite patience shall continue to direct every step of your course, till you are brought to your home at last. As I said just now, who would not be blind if he could have God for his guide ? Oh, blessed weakness, that links me to the strong ! Oh, blessed poverty that gives me a lien upon Jehovah's wealth ! Oh, blessed wretchedness, that issues in beatitude and conducts me to the happiness and bliss of God ! Beloved, as you think of your own blindness, be comforted because he sees. As you think of your own ignorance, be cheered, because he knows ; and as you comprehend your own aptness to stumble, be of good courage because he fainteth not, neither is weary ; there is no searching of his understanding. God will be their guide.

And, being their guide, *he will lead them in ways they never went before*. The beauty of the promise appears in its especial adaptation to meet

the peculiar exigence—"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not." Of course, when a blind man knows the way, he can almost go without the guide. Many of our friends afflicted with the loss of sight find their way day by day along the accustomed road; and there have been some that have been so expert, though blind, that they could go over fifty miles of country, or thread their way in town up and down the streets of a milkman's walk, serving at each customer's house without ever making a mistake. In fact, they have often acted as guides to others; but, then, it has always been along a way that they have known. And oh, brethren, there is many a blind sinner here to-night who, I have no doubt, could guide others in the ways that he knows. He could guide others in the way of the drunkard, in the way of the licentious, in the way of the swearer. He knows that way very well. I dare say he could guide young people into the way of infidelity—put a thousand horrible thoughts into their minds. But when the Lord takes such a man as that in hand, he does not lead him that way, but he leads him in a way that he never went before. Oh, I remember being led by the divine hand down the dark lane of repentance with many a sigh and many a groan. I remember being led into the more pleasant way of faith by the same divine hand, and brought to the Saviour's feet; and since then I have not known the way, have not expected to know the way; for the way of grace that lies before us may be described as the Lord described the way of Israel in the wilderness: "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." It is a new way; and when God undertakes to be our guide it is all new. Is it not written, "Behold, I make all things new." I hope that many of us know what it is to be led in a way we have not known; and I trust that others who do not know that, may breathe the prayer at once, "Lord, lead me in the way I have not known." Somebody said the other night that the way to heaven was very easily learned. It is the first turn to the right, and keep on. Well, that is very good: but I have heard it described another way—out of self, into Christ—only one step, and you are on the road to heaven. Out of self, and into Christ. It is a way that you know not, but the Lord will lead you in it.

Yet, although the way by which we go be a way that we know not, *we shall be led safely in it*; for it is not only said, "I will lead them," but "I will bring them," which is more. You may lead a man, and still he may be unable to follow you. You may be a good enough guide, but his legs may fail him. Happily the text says, "I will bring them"; that is to say, "They will assuredly follow where I effectually lead." O believer, though thou canst not see the way to heaven, trust implicitly in the Lord thy God, and thou shalt surely find thy way thither, for he that leads thee will also bring thee. There has never been a vessel which sailed with Christ as a convoy that was captured by the enemy. There was never a pilgrim who entrusted himself to Christ as a guide that lost his way and stumbled to destruction. Now as of old, our Lord Jesus Christ can affirm, "Of all that thou hast given me, I have lost none." He preserves his sheep; he keeps them; yea, unto eternal life doth he preserve them. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Blessed are they, then, who, having sight of their own, and being themselves unable to find their way, are

trusting in him, who has promised that he will effectually lead and bring them home.

Yes, and he will do this in the very narrowest ways, too, for the text says, "I will bring them by a way : I will lead them in paths." I suppose a way may be descriptive of the high road ; and the path may be like a track across the fields, over hedge and ditch, over stiles and down lanes, through the mire and through the slough. Be it, however, along a high road or among bye-paths, the Lord will lead them. Oh, beloved ! there are some very narrow ways in the Christian's pilgrimage. Do you not sometimes hear a sermon which makes you question whether you can truly be a child of God. What a narrow way it is ! You thought when the preacher discoursed the other day about free grace and dying love, what a glorious highway it was, and you were running along it. But now he begins to preach about regeneration, the work of the Spirit, and its inward marks and evidences, you are afraid, you hesitate, you stand still and wonder whether you are travelling in the right direction ; the road seems so narrow. Well, then, you must pray to your great Guide, and say, "Lord, lead me in the paths that I have not known. If there be any very narrow place—something very stringent and searching, and testing, and trying—if there be some high attainment that I have not yet reached ; if there be some sweet enjoyment I have not yet known, Lord, lead me there." You have the promise, the performance rests with him—"I will lead them in paths which they have not known." So, you see, the blessing of the text is wrapped up in this. You are to be blind, and God is to be your guide. You are not to want to see, but you are to let him see for you. You who feel yourselves incapacitated by infirmity are to be led by his unerring wisdom.

III. And this brings us, thirdly, to note WHAT SHALL COME OF IT. What shall come of it ? Why, the Lord says, "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Where are you, brother ? Are you in a dilemma where everything is dark around you, where you see not your signs, and where you feel no sweet tranquillizing assurance ? Presuming that you are one of the blind—truly blind—it will not make much difference to you. Do you not perceive that ? Why, should you or I, who have the sight of our natural eyes, want to read, it would be of little avail when the sun had gone down. "Between the lights," as we say, there is a little waste time : we cannot make out the letters. Well, now, a blind man is as well off then as he is in the middle of the day. When you happen to be in the dark you begin fretting and want a light. The blind man does not want a light : he is just as well without a light as with one. Thus it is a great mercy when God has so far enabled you to be blind—so little wanting to see—that when it is all dark around you you are just as happy as when it is all bright around you, because when it was bright you did not walk by sight, and now it is dark you do not want to walk by sight either. Oh, blessed is the secret art of living by faith, for as you turn to God in days of happiness and trust him, so do you likewise turn to him in days of sorrow and distress. In trial or in triumph you trust him still. It is a dangerous thing to begin to draw your happiness from your circumstances. Thereby you will weaken yourself ; for once having

drawn happiness from prosperous circumstances, you will, with equal ease, draw unhappiness from adverse circumstances. But if the Lord has taught you not to live according to the sight of the eyes at all, but to rejoice in the Lord always, then, you will be prepared to enjoy the same calm, the same peace, and the same happiness, be the circumstances what they may. It was a glorious speech of Job when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Was it not as much as to say, "I do not trust in him because he gave me the camels, and gave me the gold and silver, and the sheep and oxen. I do not trust him for them, though I am glad and thankful. And I do not trust him because of the earrings of gold, and because of the equipage I had when I sat in the gate amongst the citizens. But I trust him, let him do what he likes. If he shall take all away, till there is nothing left, and afflicts me till I scrape my sores with a potsherd, I will not relax my trust in him. And since I never did trust in my substance, or my health, though he go farther still, and slay me, yet will I trust in him." Say, then, dear friends, is it not a sweet contentment that does not want to see. To be delivered from regret and repining, knowing that he makes darkness light before us; and why? Because it is as light in the dark as at any other time and as safe to those who cease to walk with the eyes, and only walk by faith.

Nor is this all the meaning we may extract out of this gracious promise. If, my dear brother, you are surrounded by the darkness of trouble, *trust in God, and the trouble will vanish.* I do not say that the cause of the trouble will vanish. Perhaps you will have to bear with that; but the trouble itself will cease to trouble you. It will not touch your heart any longer, and very likely the trouble itself may go, and the cause of it may go too; for when the Lord brings his people to be resigned to what they have to endure, he frequently does not call them to endure it any longer. If you are in trouble, I can recommend to you, by experience, to be resigned. I have not so long an experience as some of the friends with grey hairs and bald heads before me, but I believe that they cannot contradict me when I say that he is a faithful God. At any rate, of this I can speak confidently—

"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
 Has gather'd thick and thunder'd loud,
 He near my soul has always stood;
 His lovingkindness, O how good!"

Thus the light of his countenance has chased away the darkness of my trouble.

And are you in the dark, child of God, through a sense of sin? Some of our friends, you know, get up so high in the scale of perfection that they never have any folly or negligence to bemoan. Most of us ordinary people are afflicted every now and then with such heart-searchings and such inward conflicts that we walk in darkness and see no light. Somehow, I think the Bible was written for people like us, rather than for our fine brethren, for it rather abounds in the details of such experience. Should it ever be my lot to get rid of all conflicts and all darkness, I shall be able to dispense with a great part of the Book of Psalms. In fact, I do not know that I should want anything particular, except

Solomon's Song, and I am afraid I could hardly get on with that, for even the spouse had to seek her Lord in the dark, and was unable to find him sometimes when she had been unwary or remiss. But, oh, if thou art dejected by reason of darkness, dismayed with a sense of sin, or distressed through soul trouble, trust in thy Lord, and thou shalt find ready relief.

"When we in darkness walk,
Nor feel the heavenly flame;
Then is the time to trust our God,
And rest upon his name."

"And when thy eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
Still at his footstool bow the knee,
And Israel's God thy peace shall be."

He will make the darkness light before thee whatever other sort of darkness may happen to befall thee. Only be thou as the blind man, who does not want to see, just leave it all to Jesus, trust in his dear name, and he will make the darkness light before thee.

And as we are delivered out of darkness, *so shall we be rescued out of difficulty*. "I will make crooked things straight." And God can make crooked things straight! Who among us has not got some crooked thing or other to deal with? As they say that there is a skeleton somewhere in every house, so there is a crook in every lot, and none can make straight what God hath made crooked. Awkward embarrassments and anxious perplexities full often drive us to our wit's end, until we do not know which way to turn. To the right hand shall I go, or to the left? Both seem equally blocked up. Shall I go forward, or shall I go backward? Both ways seem equally hazardous. The judgment has lost chart and compass. And sometimes a child of God really does not know what he ought to choose. He seems to be in a maze, and he has lost the clue. The road goes in and out, backwards and forwards, like a map of the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness. "There," saith he, "what shall I do?" Well, dear brother, the best thing to do in such a case as that is to do nothing at all, but just to trust in the Lord. There is more wisdom in a quarter of an hour's prayer than there is in a quarter of a year's consultation with friends. Oftentimes when we have sought counsel of the living God he has befriended us. When we have left things with him, we have always gone wisely. Oh, how he can make the most crooked thing that ever did happen suddenly turn out to be the very straightest thing that ever occurred for our welfare. I know that sometimes I have puzzled my head about some difficulty in my Master's service—asked opinions of lots of people, like a stupid, and I have gone home with my head aching in deeper uncertainty than ever what to do. And I have never discovered how to unravel a knotty point by my own ingenuity, but I have always found that when I at last bowed the knee, and said, "Heavenly Father, it is rather thy business than mine; it is quite beyond me, and I now leave it in thy hands to guide me," and when I have just put it up on the shelf, and said, "I will never take it down again whatever happens," it has gone all right. If I had manoeuvred to manage it for myself it would have gone wrong

enough. You are often, dear friends, busy in doing yourself a mischief, when eager to do the right thing; so you do the wrong thing after all, as though there were a fatality about it. "Stand still and see the salvation of God." A hard lesson to learn, full often, and especially to impetuous spirits, as some of us are. But when it is learnt, if we continue to practise it, we shall find it the way of wisdom. Now, my dear sister, do not fall in too hastily with that proposal which has been made to you. Think it over first; pray about it. Just you stop. You may get yourself into a world of trouble. Young man, it certainly does look as if a very fine opening was presented before you; but mind what you are at. There is a fine opening for flies into many a spider's web, but they would be glad to find a fine opening for getting out again. Just stop awhile. Stand still, and give reflection time to whisper in your ear. Delude not thyself with flattering visions. Confess that the eyes of thine understanding are dark and blind. Let the Lord guide you. Do not have an eye to your own advantage; do not have an eye to the opinion of this world. Seek thou first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things will go well with thee. Ah, they will call thee such a fool not to jump at that chance of commencing trade with a man who you know is no Christian. But you are told not to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. Therefore, do not disobey your Master's command, I pray you. Just back out of it, and give yourself up to be led and guided by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and you will go right enough. Here is one of the benefits of being blind in this sense, and this is what shall come of it.

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT WILL BE THE END OF IT?

Why the end of it will be, if you can see nothing, if you are blind, and yield yourself to the Lord to lead you, leaving all that concerns you to his counsel and his care, your life will be strewn with mercies—fulfilled promises. "These things will I do unto them;" and you shall have a life of everlasting love, for he adds, "and not forsake them." You shall find God present with you as long as you live.

Never does a child of God venture everything by faith but the venture answers. You that speculate—I have no doubt that you find that your speculations are as often bad as good; but if you risk everything apparently in your confidence in God it is no speculation: it is a certainty. He will not fail you, I was greatly refreshed yesterday by what you may think to be a very small thing, but it was not small to God. I was turning over our church book, and I came to the year 1861, and somewhere in January there is the record, "This church requires £4,000 in order to pay for the new tabernacle, and we, the undersigned, not knowing where it will come from, fully believe in our heavenly Father that he will send it all to us in the proper time, as witness our hands." And there stand subscribed my hand, and the hands of my deacons, and the hands of my elders, and the hands of a great many Christian women amongst us. Well, I was pleased to see that we had thus put our confidence in God. There were one or two names down there of very prudent brethren, and I recollect at the time I saw them sign it I was rather surprised, because they had been doubting most of the time whether we should ever get the money; but they signed their names like men. A month or two afterwards—say two months—there

is this record : "I, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who am less than the least of all saints, set to my seal that God is true, for he has supplied us with all this £4,000." And then follows a fresh minute like this : "We, the undersigned, hereby declare our confidence in Almighty God, who has done to us according to our faith, and sent us, even before the time when we needed it, all that was wanted. We are ashamed of ourselves to think that we ever had a doubt, and we pray that we may always confide in him in all things henceforth and for ever." And then there is a long list of signatures. Some of the names down there are those of people whom I can see now. You put your names down there, thanking God that faith was honoured. Well, brethren, we have had a good many times to do something like that for large amounts, as a church, but has the Lord ever failed us yet? Never! And he never will, and you may depend upon it that in your business, in your household affairs, in your spiritual struggles, if you will trust God he will be as good as your trust, and better. You will never be able to say, "I rested in him and was confounded. I trusted in him, and I found his promise fail." Mind, you must have a promise to rest on. You must not go and ask the Lord for every whim you like to get into your heads; but, if he has promised it to you and you can plead a promise, and it is for his glory, and you know it is, then see if ever he will run back. Search ye this book, by inspiration given, and see whether ever promise of his did fail. Turn, then, to your own lives, by strange experience led, and answer this question—Has he ever been a wilderness unto you? Has he ever been a dry well, or a cloud that mocked you, and yielded you no rain? You have trusted in men, and you have met your reward, for "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." But when you have trusted in God, have not you met a very different reward? And can you not say, "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is"? There, you see, you have got this—"These things will I do unto you." If you can just trust, the promise will be fulfilled.

Then the last clause of the text is peculiarly inspiriting—"And not forsake them." "*And not forsake them.*" This is no vain tautology. I think that the Lord's people are subject at times to a sudden fluttering of heart, a nervous depression of spirits, and a great trembling, just when their faith has been in the fullest exercise, and the goodness of God has been most conspicuously displayed to them; and I do believe that this little sentence is intended to be at once a powerful tonic and an efficacious sedative. Whence came it; did it arise from weariness of the flesh in the case of Elijah? You remember how he showed his zeal for the Lord of hosts on Mount Carmel; how vehemently he contended with the prophets of Baal; how signally his prayer was answered when the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench; and how he brought down the prophets of Baal to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. And you remember how soon afterwards he went a day's journey in the wilderness, sat down under a juniper tree, requested that he might die, and said, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." He had much fear, but there was no danger that the Lord would forsake him.

Or it may be that this strange terror is the reaction and result after intense excitement. David had been again and again delivered out of the hand of Saul, and had heard his old enemy acknowledge that he had sinned and played the fool and erred exceedingly. Yet he went on his way, and said in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul!" But was he forsaken of God? Had he any real cause to suspect such a climax to the Lord's dealings with him? Far from it.

I do not know, but I am prone to attribute this fear sometimes to the infirmity of age, when decay creeps over the mortal frame, and the soul sympathizes with the weakness of the flesh. The Psalmist, as I have already intimated, touches all the keys of human passion and all the moods to which believers are subject. Certainly his faith was in full vigour when he said, "*I will go in the strength of the Lord God. I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.*" Nor could his gratitude have been at fault, when he reviews his life from childhood to advanced years, saying, "*O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works!*" But you can never forget the impassioned prayer that followed: "NOW, ALSO, WHEN I AM OLD AND GREY-HEADED, O GOD, FORSAKE ME NOT!" Just ring this bell once or twice, this silver, this delicious silver bell. "These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." They will yet get into trouble. Their friends will desert them as the leaves are gone from the trees in winter; but, saith the Lord, "I will not forsake them." They will be very sick, and they will lie in bed till the bed gets hard beneath them; but "these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." They will come to die, and the devil will tempt them. Flesh will be very weak, and their bodily pains distressing; but "these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." They will pass through the river, and they will stand in judgment; but still, as it is written so shall it be, these things will I do unto them and not forsake them." Go on, beloved; go on, beloved. Though blind, and you cannot see your way, go on, beloved. In the dark and crooked paths, go on, beloved. For as surely as you trust in God, God will fulfil every promise of his to you, and to the last these shall be his words in your ears, "And not forsake them," for I will not fail them or forsake them is his promise to his people. Throwing that grateful reflection into a verse—the verse of a familiar hymn, I will conclude.

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not, desert to his foes.
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I will never, no never, no never forsake."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah xlii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—28 (Ver. III.), 741.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD OF THE HILLS AND GOD OF THE VALLEYS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 27TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

"And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord."—1 Kings xx. 28.

THE Syrians had been defeated by the Israelites whom they despised. This victory had been achieved by so small a number of men over so vast a host that the Syrians were driven to the conclusion that there was something supernatural about it, and they ascribed their defeat to the God of Israel. They were right in doing so. Brethren, let not these heathen shame us. They knew to whom the crown of the victory belonged, and, little as they understood Jehovah, yet they recognized that his right hand and his holy arm had gotten for his people the victory. Now, if the Lord has prospered you, if in your souls peace and joy are reigning, or if you have enjoyed success in Christian service, take heed that you do not lift up your horn on high and take honour to yourselves. Render all the glory to God, to whom it is most justly due. Let that psalm, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory," be always on your heart, and often on your tongue. The tendency of the human heart towards pride is very strong, and Satan, the great usurper, is always eager to stir us up to rob God of his glory. Yet nothing is more fatal to peace, nothing more sure to provoke God, nothing more certain to bring upon us times of disaster and distress. "The Lord thy God is a jealous God," and he is jealous of this thing amongst others, that he will not give his glory to another. He will not allow those whom he uses for his purposes to ascribe their victories unto themselves; the Lord alone must be exalted. Whatever has been done by us, the great Worker who used us must have the praise. We have been nothing more than the axe in the hand of God if we have felled the cedar, nothing more than the net if we have brought the fish to shore. Unto him therefore be praise for ever. So far let us learn from the heathen Syrians.

No. 1,811.

While the Syrians thus ascribed their defeat unto Jehovah, they made a great mistake as to his character, for they supposed him to be a local God, like their own imaginary deities. They had gods for the mountains and gods for the lesser hills, gods for the rivers, gods for the fields, gods for their houses, gods for their gardens, and these so-called gods were powerless out of their own sphere. They imagined the only living and true God to be a God like unto their idols. Let us abhor this dishonouring of God and avoid the sin by never daring to make unto ourselves a god after our own ideas. The art of god-making is very common among men. Instead of going to revelation to see what God is, and humbly believing in him as he reveals himself, men sit down and consider what sort of God he ought to be, and in so doing they are no wiser than the man who makes a god of mud or wood or stone. If we make a god in our own thoughts, after our own ideas, we have virtually made a similitude of him to whom no creature can be compared, we have tried to comprehend the incomprehensible and limit the infinite, and in so doing we are idolaters, for we have made the likeness of something that is in our own mind, and consequently in the earth beneath, and even though it be not a material image, we have broken in spirit the first and second commands. No man knows what God is, save only as he has revealed himself, and thoughts and imaginings apart from this are idolatrous. Believe thou what he reveals, but do not after the fashion of the Syrians begin to conceive of him according to the darkness of thine own feeble and foolish mind. Ben-hadad's counsellors were led in their error to utter a blasphemy; they said, "He is the God of the hills, but not the God of the valleys," and I know not into what profanities our own proud thoughts may lead us also.

It is worthy of notice that, because of this blasphemy of the Syrians, God was pleased to deliver his people Israel. It is not the only time by many in which the blasphemies of the adversary have wrought good for the people of God. You might have supposed that God would have said, "It matters nothing what these ignorant heathens say? Who cares for their slanderous falsehoods?" But our God is jealous—he is ever represented in Scripture as being tender of his own glory; and, therefore, though Israel was guilty, and Ahab, their king, was detestable, yet God determines that Ahab and Israel shall smite Ben-hadad and Syria because of what Syria had said. I would invite all of you who tremble for the ark of the Lord to draw courage from the naughty language of the ungodly. When the infidel scoffs at God you are sorry for his sin, but you may take heart of hope that perhaps God will now interpose. "It is time for thee, Lord, to work, because they have made void thy law." When you see a sceptical philosophy growing, as it is at this day, more and more daring and insulting towards the truth of God, do not be downhearted because of that, but rather say, "They will provoke the Lord, and by-and-by he will pluck his right hand out of his bosom, he will rend the heavens and come down, and make the mountains to flow at his feet: he will give to his gospel great power, so that his truth shall be triumphant, and his adversaries shall know that verily there is a God in Israel." As choice flavours are by a happy chemistry extracted from poisonous substances, so may we draw comfort from the blasphemous letter of Rabshekah, and from the impious language of Ben-hadad, for God will

be provoked against them, and will come forth to the avenging of his chosen nation and the establishment of his own cause.

Now, this morning I have one lesson to teach, which is this. As the Syrians fell into a great and blasphemous sin by thinking that God was a local God, a God of the hills and not of the valleys, we may fall into much evil by the same surmisings. The subject of this morning's discourse will be a warning against imitating the Syrians by limiting the Holy One of Israel under any circumstances whatever. We may do so on several occasions, and in several ways.

I. WE MAY LIMIT THE LORD BY MISTRUSTING THE SUCCESS OF HIS CAUSE.

We are very often tempted to tremble for the ark of the Lord, and to stretch out a presumptuous hand to steady it as Uzzah did. Our fathers tell us, and we are getting a little into their modes of thinking, that we have fallen upon evil days and degenerate times; we have seen them shake their heads and call the present age a day of blasphemy and rebuke, and although we have not quite thought so, for there has been enough of youth left in us still to look more hopefully upon things, and we have said, and we think we are not wrong in saying, that these are good times and hopeful, and that there are many things which should make the Christian wear a cheerful aspect and rejoice in the hope of better times; yet we have in a measure shared in their fears. The temptation is at times heavy upon us to think that the gospel cannot conquer the world, that the truth of Jesus cannot spread in the midst of the thick darkness which surrounds us, that the good old cause is falling into a desperate condition, and that, mayhap, the victory we have looked for will not come after all. Here let us convict ourselves of having thought God to be the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys, for we have generally based our fears upon our perception that the front of the battle has changed. In the olden times the church of God was persecuted beyond measure; the furnace was heated seven times hotter; *extirpation* was the word, the emperors of Rome determined to stamp out Christianity as though it were a disease, and they vowed to put an end to its very name. But the church of God triumphed over all opposition. Like a good ship in stormy waters, she mounted the waves which sought to engulf her, and made headway by the winds which howled around her. We all perceive that God was with his Church in those tempestuous times, and yet we are apt to fear that the petty persecutions suffered by our village churches, and the cold contempt that is often poured upon Christian men in polite society, will prove too much for the faithful. God, who could help Christians to play the man in the amphitheatre at Rome, and enable them to die at the stake, or on the gridiron, is yet mistrusted, and we dare to suspect that he will not gain the victory in the battle which is waged by a few poor peasants in a village against a popish priest and a persecuting squire. For shame! Do we really dream that he is the God of the hills, and not the God of the valleys? We have heard good men argue mistrustfully from another point of view. They say that persecution after all does not hurt the church; it only winnows her and drives away her chaff: but these are far worse days, for prosperity undermines piety. Christians

take things easy, and there are so many false professors, so much of a name to live while spiritual death abounds, and all this is deadly to the church of God. Depend upon it, since Satan could not kill the church by roaring at her like a lion, he is now trying to crush her by hugging her like a bear. There is truth in this, but it is not all the truth. Do you really think, my brethren, that God cannot preserve his Church in the particular trial through which she is now passing? Is he the God of the hills of persecution, but not the God of the valleys of prosperity? Chase away the thought. Besides, you are in great fear, my brother, because a new heresy has sprung up, or an old one has revived. Dreadful doctrine dismays you; you are saddened by teaching which assails the vitals of Christianity, and is so insidious that it is hard to meet it, and you say, "Any other than this the church could have resisted, but this will deaden her very soul; it doth eat as doth a canker." What, my brethren, are you now afraid? Do you not remember when the church was full of gnostic heresy, and when, afterwards, Arianism afflicted her? Have you not read of the times when the deity of Christ was almost universally denied, and yet the gospel lived on. Every truth was in its turn assailed, and the professing church itself for centuries was almost universally apostate; and yet the gospel is not dead, nor its voice silenced. The Lord was the God of the hills, and put these heresies down, and trod them under foot as straw is trodden for the dunghill. And let new heresies come, let men assail the gospel with fresh errors, God is God of the valleys as well as God of the hills, and will defeat them one by one as they arise. Ritualism, Spiritualism, and Materialism will go the way of all the other adversaries of the Lord: into smoke shall they consume away.

"But," says one, "infidelity is now so rampant, and it takes the form of science and philosophy, and calls into its aid the very thoughtfulness of man which once seemed to be on the side of the gospel; therefore there is cause for great alarm." Yet will we not fear, for many infidelities have shone forth and have died out as meteors of the night. They come like shadows, and like shades they vanish: as successive summers have brought forth new harvests of leaves upon the trees of the forest, which in the following autumns have faded and gone, even so new infidelities have flourished and decayed, but God's eternal truth shines on the same as ever, like the sun in the heavens, without variableness or shadow of turning. Trust ye in the Lord for ever. He who confounded the first races of blasphemers against his holy cause, and turned their craftiness into folly and made the wise men mad, can do the same again, yea, and will do it even unto the end. If the church be assailed in any novel method by new modes of Satanic influence, or fresh inventions of human craft and philosophy, let us never entertain a doubt concerning the cause whose banner Christ has stained with his heart's blood, and whose honour the eternal power and Godhead of the Almighty are sworn to maintain. Let the times shift and change as they may, but God is master of the times. Circumstances alter cases, but they do not alter God. New modes of attack may threaten us with new fears, but they do not really involve any new dangers, for God, who knoweth all things, can meet the new adversary and foil him as he did his foes of old.

I have known this despondency of heart arise from another cause. "Ah," say some, "I do not know what is to become of the church, because in those olden times which you have mentioned it is true she had great enemies, but then she had great men in her midst. Look at the Fathers and how they fought; remember the Reformers and the men who took up their descending mantles, the godly and learned Puritans; consider the great names of church history, and say where do you find such men in these days? Have we not fallen on an age of little men and nobodies?" Well, suppose we have: I do not anticipate any ill results from that, since great men are only men, and little men are still men; the God who used those men whom we call great first made them great; they were nothing of themselves, and he is just as able to use the men whom we call little, and to make them so efficient that the next generation will think them as great as those who went before. The so-called greatness or littleness of men must, after all, depend on the power of God which is shown in them. I dare to hope that if the instruments grow less and less likely to claim the honour of success for themselves they are growing more and more fit to be used by the Lord our God; for this reason I look for even greater displays of divine power in this time of supposed decline. He is the God of the hills truly, the God of Augustine and Luther, the God of Knox and Whitfield, but the God of the valleys also, and therefore our God, and our confidence. He can use the men of our own time to build up his church and convert the nations.

"Ah," says one, "but I do not so much lament the lack of eminent men as the absence of the grand old spirit of the early church." What was that spirit, think you? There was a freshness, an enthusiasm, a heroism about the first Christians which we see not now. I grant you there was; but if it was real power, whence came it but from the Holy Spirit; and has the Holy Spirit ceased to illuminate, quicken, and strengthen the minds of men? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Do the heavens no longer drop with dew? Is the horn of anointing oil emptied? Is there no sacred breath with which to fan the gracious flame in the church? No, my brethren, the Spirit of God has not ceased to work. If we cannot evince the enthusiasm of the church's youth we will cultivate the undying perseverance of the church's manhood, and strive and struggle on, God helping us, till our Lord appeareth: for the day must and shall come when the truth shall prevail and the God of truth shall be exalted, and to the moles and bats the demon gods and their images shall be cast for ever. Dishonour not your God by unbelief: faint-hearted soldiers, bring not defeat upon yourselves by your cowardly fears. Believe in God; so shall ye be established. God waiteth till ye believe in him, and when his whole church shall with brave confidence be sure of victory, victory shall certainly come to her. The Lord increase our faith, and henceforth in this respect let us never dream that Jehovah the God of the hills is not the God of the valleys.

II. WE MAY COMMIT THE SIN OF SYRIA BY DOUBTING THE HELP WHICH THE LORD WILL RENDER TO US.

Sometimes we are brought into sore trouble, and then we imagine the Lord will not help us as he helped the old saints, of whom we read in the Bible. We can believe all about Abraham and Moses and

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I have even known Christians say, "I cannot go to God about my trials, they are so ordinary and commonplace. I can pray about spiritual things, but may I pray about temporals? I can take my sins and burdens of serious care to him, but may I pray about little domestic troubles?" How can you ask that question? He tells you the hairs of your head are all numbered: those are not spiritual things surely. You are told to cast *all* your care on him. Is he the God of the hills of the higher spiritual interests of his children, and is he not the God of the valleys of their hourly troubles? Does he not bid us ask him to give us day by day our daily bread? Has he not given his angels charge to bear us up lest we dash our foot against a stone? Has he not said of his people that they shall lack no good thing? Oh, what mistakes unbelief makes about God, and what questions it raises which ought never to be raised at all. Troubled one, thou mayest go to thy heavenly Father about anything, about everything. He will help thee in every trial wherever thou mayest be: though the thing be little, yet remember everything is little to him, and the difference between an archangel and a sparrow is not so very great with God. The difference between the ruling of a kingdom and the guidance of your Sunday-school class may seem great to you, but it is almost invisible to God, to whom the nations are as a drop of a bucket. As you feel you could trust him with great troubles, so be sure that you rely upon him as to the minor ones; yea, tell him all your griefs, and cast all your burdens upon him. Truly he is the God of the hills, but he is the God of the valleys too.

Sometimes this fear that God will not help us arises from a change in our inward experience. "Oh," saith one, "I have been in deep waters of soul-trouble before now, and the Lord has helped me; I have fought with dragons, and done battle with the Prince of Darkness in the valley of the shadow of death, and Jesus was with me, and I do not wonder at it, for the fight seemed worthy of a God; but now it is only a little thorn in the flesh that worries me, and I hardly dare beseech the Lord to remove it, or help me to bear it. I have experience of a different sort altogether from that of former days; I grow cold, torpid, indifferent, careless; I do not seem to live the grand struggling life I once lived when I was familiar with gigantic spiritual difficulties, and tasted exalted delights: can I expect God to help me now? Will he arouse me from my lethargy? Will he stir me to devotion when I feel that I cannot pray? Will he bring back my spiritual feeling when I feel numbed and dead to all but pain? Can the Lord revive Laodicea? Can he heat again the lukewarm? Will he quicken such a dead lump, such a mass of lifeless flesh as I am?" O my brother, do not ask such questions: there is no condition into which a believer can fall but God can and will deliver him out of it; there is no trial or temptation, though it be low, degrading, base, but what the Lord can as much assist you when labouring under it as in the sublimer struggles of the most noble life. Commit yourself to God, and entertain no fears as to his all-sufficiency and faithfulness.

But you say, "I would not entertain any of these fears if I were like eminent saints, but I am far inferior to the godly men of whom I read and hear. I am obscure and insignificant; I have little talent, and

even less grace. I am a nobody." Be it so; but is our God the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys? Will God help Oliver Cromwell and not help a private soldier who trusts in God and keeps his powder dry? Will God aid a Whitfield and not help a poor local preacher holding forth upon the green? Will he assist the earnest minister who addresses thousands, and desert the simple girl who teaches a dozen little children the old, old story of the cross? Is this after the fashion of God, to patronise the eminent and neglect the lowly? Does Jesus despise the day of small things? Surely you have misread the Scriptures if you think so, for the Christ of the gospels took note of a widow's two mites, and was pleased with the hosannas of boys and girls. He rejoiced that his Father revealed his great things not to the wise and prudent, but to babes; and he called to his work, not the high priests and the philosophers, but the fishermen and the publicans. So do not, because you see a difference between yourself and others, and a change in the circumstances of your trial, and all the rest of it, begin to think that the Heavenly Father will desert you, or else I shall again have to tell you that he is God of the valleys as well as the hills.

III. IT IS VERY EASY TO FALL INTO THIS SIN BY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THE EXPERIENCES OF OURSELVES AND OTHERS. Some minds are rugged and craggy, broken up and tossed about. In them you are astounded by seeing great rifts of conflict and terrible chasms of unbelief. Their hearts wear awful scars where the tempests of trial have swept all before them, and laid bare the roots of their being; and then on the other hand they show such wonderful elevations of thought their soul mounts aloft beyond the clouds into the blue serene where God dwells, among the things unlawful for a man to utter. Everything about them is stupendous, majestic, sublime, or terrible; and little men who have heard of their awful experiences suspiciously enquire whether such feelings and conflicts can be consistent with the grace of God. Yet who would say of the bleak and desolate mountains that the Lord is not there? Was he not on Sinai? Did he not come from Paran? Is not the strength of the hills the heritage of the Lord? Among the cloud-capped Alps Jehovah's voice is often heard, and the rocks are riven by his flames of fire. The thoughtful soul may often hear the rustle of the skirts of Jehovah's garments in the stillness of those lone hills. God is in rugged souls, in the ravines of a broken heart, and in the caves of dread despair: he overrules the whirlwind of temptation and the tempests of Satanic blasphemy, and anon he is seen in the bow of hope and the sunshine of full assurance. The Lord is in every heroic struggle against sin, and in that eager clinging to his word which is seen in so many tempted souls. Yet men judge their fellows and say, "The Lord cannot be there," even where he is most mightily. On the other hand, I have known persons fashioned in this rough mould look down on the gentle, quiet life of the useful, less thoughtful, and perhaps less intelligent Christian, who is like the valley, and they have said, "Lord, what shall this man do? He does not sympathize with my soul troubles, he has had little or no law work, he does not understand my grand conceptions of truth, he enters not into the deep things of God." Remember that this may be true, and yet the brother may be a better man than you are. He may be one of the fields which the

Lord has blessed, a low lying valley, cultivated by God's Spirit till it yields golden sheaves, by which multitudes are fed. If he blesses many by his quiet genial life, who are you that you should condemn him? Brother from the valley, do not misjudge the dweller in the mountain, and inhabitant of the crag, do not look down with contempt upon the tenant of the plain, for God is in both your lives; God is in the stormy life of the afflicted, and God is in the restfulness of the humble and contented. In the tried life and in the useful life God is variously but equally manifested, and I beg you always to see God as far as he can be seen in all his people. Recognize the virtues of your brother wherein *you* are deficient, and not the graces wherein *he* fails. Condemn not the man whom God has approved. He is God of the hills and he is God of the valleys, take your delight in both.

Then about yourself, dear friend, do not mournfully complain, "Alas, I have never experienced what I perceive has been the lot of my brother in the Lord. He has had a deep, rugged, terrible experience of fightings with the devil, and of contests with his own corruptions: I know very little of these matters." Do not desire to know them, for if you know Christ it will suffice you. Or if, on the other hand, you are much buffeted and tossed about, do not condemn yourself and say you are no child of God because you have not the constant enjoyment, the sweetness and rest of other believers; it is enough for you that Christ is yours. You are a crag Christian, be satisfied to have your feet upheld upon your high places, God is the God of the hills as surely as he is God of the valleys. Thus I have shown how in a third way we may fall into this error, but time fails me, and I cannot enlarge thereon. May the Holy Spirit further instruct you therein in all wisdom and prudence.

IV. A VERY COMMON SHAPE OF THIS SIN IS LIMITING THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL. Listen to this, you who would fain be saved, but fear you cannot be. I have known you limit the power of the gospel by supposing that it will only save certain sinners. You heard of a great drunkard who was converted, of a swearer who turned to God, and you said to yourself, "I do not wish to be a drunkard or a swearer, but I have seen many of that sort of people saved, and I, who have led a moral life, have not been renewed in heart: it makes me envy them." Dear friend, why should not you also obtain salvation? Is Jesus the Saviour of open and gross sinners and not of the more secret offenders? Is the very foulness of sin an aid to salvation? Impossible! There is certainly no want of adaptation in the gospel to meet the case of the naturally moral and excellent, and you must not think there is. Jesus, who saves publicans and harlots, also blesses the truthseeker, and sows the honest and good ground. When you read of such and such a person who has been a great offender being suddenly struck down and turned to God you do not wish that you were like him in his sin, but you could endure that evil if there might but be in you as manifest a change as can be seen in him. I know the feeling, but it is based upon an error, and tends to foster the idea that more of God's grace is displayed in one case than in another. True conversion is in all cases the work of God, and consequently a display of omnipotent power. The Lord presents the gospel to every creature, and whosoever believeth in Jesus, whether he has been a gross offender or only a common sinner, shall find

salvation through the blood of the atonement. Jesus is not the Saviour of a class, but his power is unto all and upon all them that believe. To men of all sorts his grace extends: he blesses both hills and valleys.

"Ah," says another, "I could believe in Jesus, whatever my sins had been or had not been, if I had known the awful conviction and painful sense of sin which some have known. I read of one that he was ready to lay violent hands upon himself when tormented by conscience; I have never felt like that. I know that sin is a dreadful thing, but I do not feel driven to despair by it, as I have heard others say, or else I could believe." Friend, dost thou think that Christ's ability to save depends upon thy fearful apprehensions of thy guilt? O soul, he is not the God of the hills only, but of the valleys also. He saves a Saul of Tarsus, whom he strikes down as a proud hill sinner, but he also saves Lydia, whose heart he opens to the truth, as one of the dwellers in the plain. Those who are gently brought to Christ, if they do but rest in him, are as truly saved as those who are driven to him by fierce terrors and terrible forebodings of the wrath to come. Jesus is essential to every saving experience, but no form of experience is essential to fit a man for Jesus.

"Yet," cries another, "I am afraid that the Lord Jesus will never conquer the kind of sin which has set up its dominion in my soul. I believe he can drive out of men their great and crying sins, but my tendencies are more subtle and injurious. I feel a dreadful indifference stealing over my spirit; where shall I find awakening and enlivening?" I answer, you will find help to overcome your sin just where the blasphemer and the drunkard find theirs, namely, in Christ Jesus, and the sanctifying power of his Holy Spirit. Jesus can overcome one sin as well as another. There is no sin in the whole catalogue but what the blood of Christ can wash its guilt away, and the water which flowed with the blood can take away its power over the soul. Jesus can give us the double deliverance, both from the criminality and the bondage of sin, whether the sin be of the mountain or of the valley. Only trust him, and the dominion of sin shall be broken.

Christian people, I shall now speak to you, and remind you that too frequently when you are about to tell of Jesus and his love you feel a desire to select your congregation. In your heart you dream that certain persons are more conquerable by the power of God than others. "It is of no use trying after the conversion of So-and-so," say you. You put certain characters down in the black list and regard them as hopeless, while for others you feel more hopeful and work among them with more spirit. Have you not, in a measure, fallen into the sin of Syria? Is not your Christ, evidently, the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys? Your business is to preach the gospel to every sort of sinner, to every class of mind, and to every rank of persons; and when you do so, believing that the gospel in the hands of the Holy Ghost has an omnipotent power and works on all sides, and among all classes of people, then shall you see the hand of God with you working mightily.

V. Upon the last point we must only give a hint or two: WE CAN, AFTER THE FASHION OF SYRIA, LIMIT THE POWER OF GOD BY NOT EXPECTING HIS DIVINE AID TO BE GIVEN TO US IN HIS SERVICE.

When we are urged to labour for the Lord we are tempted to excuse ourselves upon various grounds, and we speak as if we could not reckon

upon divine assistance. Often the plea is that gifts and talents are scanty with us. This may be quite true, but it does not prevent our being used of the Lord for his gracious purposes. God is the God of the many-gifted and gracious man, but he is also the God of the one-talented man who seeks to glorify him. We are accepted according to what we have, and not according to what we have not. "But I have such peculiarity of disposition, I am so retiring that I cannot hope for a blessing." Brother, is this an argument which will hold water? Is God the God of the impudent and bold, but not the God of the modest? Is grace given to brazen faces, but not to those who are meek and lowly? I am sure it is not so. Cease from such vain excuses. "Ah, but my sphere of life is a very difficult one. I dwell among such strange people. I find no sympathy, and very few back me up in what I attempt." Ah, you would like a sphere made on purpose for you, would you not? And when you had it there would be no necessity for your entering upon it, because all the good would be done already. Here is a lamp well lit! It objects to be placed where it is dark; it would like to be hung up in the sunshine. But what is the good of a lamp in the daylight? And what is the use of a Christian man in a place where everything is already as he desires it to be? If the servant of the Lord be wise, he will look at the needs of the people as a call for his labours; he will regard disadvantages as advantages, and difficulties as things to be overcome. Indeed, to the believer, even impossibility is only another name for a matter in which the power of God is more than ordinarily to be manifested in answer to believing prayer. The man who knows his God is strong, and performs great exploits, he judges all things to be alike easy with the Lord, and knows nothing of a God of the hills who is not also God of the valleys.

"Ah," says one, "but I cannot expect God to bless me, for I feel so unworthy." Do you suppose, then, that those whom God greatly blesses are worthy? If you ever meet with a man who feels worthy to be blessed he is the very person whom God does not bless at all. The most favoured feel most their unworthiness of such favours. Your sense of unworthiness must not be taken as a reason why God cannot bless you; it may rather be regarded as itself a blessing.

"Still," say you, "I do not know how it is, but I feel such a trembling about my work, and the place in which I live, and the people among whom I labour." Now, to be brief, this feeling is your great hindrance, and you must get rid of it. There is no reason for trembling if you look the matter in the face. Has God sent you? Then God is with you, and why should you fear? If you give yourself up to God entirely, desiring that he should use every atom of you exactly as he pleases, and *where* he pleases, then there can be no cause for fear. All things are equally possible with God, and every sphere is equally hopeful when God leads the way; every time, and every age, and every man are all in the hand of the omnipotent and eternal Lord. If God sends you to prophecy to dry bones with Ezekiel, or to preach to Ninevites with Jonah, he will be with you in either case, and you will be quite as happy in your preaching as if he sent you to expound the Scriptures to Bereans or tell of Jesus to devout and honourable women. Your surroundings should not be the cause of fear to you, for they are of small

weight in the scale. Is the Father with you? Is Jesus with you? Is the Holy Spirit with you? Then though you are one man, like Samson, the lone champion, and have no weapon to fight with except that which your enemies compare to an ass's jawbone, yet lay hold of it man and throw yourself upon the whole army of toes, and heaps upon heaps shall they lie before you. Greater is he that is for you than all they that be against you. "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbael thou shalt become a plain." Do I hear you sigh, "Would God I could get to this faith and keep there." I pray the Lord to help you, for if you believe the utmost you can concerning the Lord, it will not be one whit too much. If you trust him most implicitly you will not trust him too fully. You shall often be ashamed of your unbelief, but never of your hope; you shall often have to blush to think you doubted, but never because you trusted. Nobody shall ever meet you, not even a devil, and say, "Thou fool, thou hast relied on the Lord too much." Time will prove the contrary. Therefore rest in the God of the valleys and in the God of the hills, and glory in him for ever and ever.

It is possible for unconverted men to fall into the sin of which we are speaking, and I would like to give them this caution before dismissing them. Do any of you unconverted ones hope to escape from the punishment which God will bring upon the ungodly? If you do, your reasons are vain and will turn out to be lies. God punished Pharaoh and others in this life, and he will punish all the ungodly in the life to come. As surely as he smote sinners of old he will smite *you* ere long. You may say, "I am not a drunkard." Very well; but he who is the God of the hills is the God of the valleys, and if you remain unregenerate, even though you have never been an open offender, you shall be visited for your heart sins. God will smite the valley sinners as well as the hill sinners, and though you say, "I have always attended the house of God and used the outward means," yet assuredly, unless you believe in Jesus, God who smites the thoughtless heathen will smite the yet more guilty hearer of the word who rejects the blood of Christ. God will deal out equal justice to all mankind. He is the God both of the hills and of the valleys, and no impenitent sinner shall escape the rod of his justice. If thou believest not on Christ thou shalt be lost, whoever thou mayest be. If thou wilt now trust Jesus thou shalt be saved, whether thou dwell in hill or vale. God grant thee grace to believe at once, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Kings xx. 1—30.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—192, 212, 499.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOOD NEWS FOR SEEKERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 3RD, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"They shall praise the Lord that seek him."—Psalm xxii. 26.

THESE are the words of Jesus on the cross, which the inspired prophet wrote beforehand concerning him. When the Saviour uttered this sentence he had just passed through the experience of a seeker as far as it was possible for him to do so. He had been engaged in earnest, fervent, pleading prayer, on account of his having been left without his Father's presence. He had cried, "Be not thou far from me, O Lord : O my strength, haste thee to help me." With strong crying and tears he had implored salvation from the lion's mouth. He had at last been heard and delivered, and he exclaimed with joy, "He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him ; but when he cried unto him he heard. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation : I will pay my vows before them that fear him." Thus, you see, because he had known the agony of an anxious seeker, had been heard in his seeking, and therefore felt praise rising in his own soul, he learned sympathy with all seeking souls of every age, and foresaw that they also would magnify the name of the Lord. Jesus knows every experience, for he has passed through the same. Does not this thought already whisper comfort to your soul ? My seeking friend, is it not a good omen that Jesus was heard in that he feared ? Does not the fact that Jesus can sympathise with you raise some hope in your heart ? It is true he never lived without the presence of God, as you have done, in consequence of personal sin ; but for a grand reason, namely, because he stood in our stead, he was forsaken of God, and therefore was compelled to cry after him, even as you are doing, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? Why art thou so far from helping me ?" Therefore he understands the grief which troubles your fainting heart, and enters into all your distresses while you are bewailing yourself and lamenting that you cry in the day time and the Lord

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hears not, and that in the night season you plead in vain. This reflection at the outset of our discourse should be as the note of a silver bell, soft, and restful to your wearied ear. Jesus foretells your success in seeking as the result of his own experience.

Our Lord's great object in laying down his life upon the cross was the Father's glory. No other object was worthy of him. He sought the salvation of men in order to the glory of God, and so in his extreme agonies our Lord Jesus placed this joy before him, and consoled himself by foreseeing that God would be praised by seeking souls in consequence of his death. He solaces himself with the reflection, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord : and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship thee." He dwells upon the truth that "They shall praise the Lord that seek him," and he sees in this honouring of God the reward which his soul sought after. What he foresaw from his look-out upon the cross is actually taking place every day : for seekers are learning to be singers. The choirs of heaven, how shall they be filled ? As yet there are many vacant seats, and the full chorus is not as yet heard. Whence shall they come who shall complete that orchestra ? They shall be called by grace from among ungodly men, and led to long for God : "They shall praise the Lord that seek him." Fear not, for the number of the elect shall be accomplished, and no part of heaven's music shall flag for lack of minstrels. From the choirs of earth the saintly souls are being withdrawn one by one to unite in the harmonies of heaven. Just when their voices become most mellow, and most clear, they leave us for the ivory palaces and their ceaseless melodies. How shall the praises of God be maintained here below ? If one by one the sweet voices grow dumb, and the singers are laid in the sepulchre, whence shall we replenish our numbers and maintain the daily praise ? Fear not, there are new voices on the way. "They shall praise the Lord that seek him." There are souls now weeping for sin and longing for a Saviour who will soon find him, and then will become most hearty singers of the new song. They are coming, coming in their thousands even now. The music of praise shall be continued as long as the sun, and the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. From generation to generation shall the name of the Lord be praised. This brings great gladness to my spirit as a pastor, for I know that there are some present here this day who are seeking the Saviour, and it rejoices me to know that they will soon be among the most earnest in praising the name of the Lord. They will not always wear sackcloth, they will put on the silken garments of praise ere long. We do not know where they are, for seekers are usually very quiet and retired, but there are some present whom I suspect of secret searches after my Lord. The Lord has seen them as he did Nathanael under the fig tree, and even his servant begins to spy them out. There are young children seeking : boys and girls who dare not yet speak to their parents are in private praying for grace. Blessed be the Saviour of the young, these little ones shall grow up and praise God when their fathers have gone to their reward. Young men and maidens too are turning to Christ, though perhaps they would blush if personally charged with the holy search. Men, too, who are in their prime are coming to Jesus to spend their strength in the service of the Redeemer. The Lord is gently touching many hearts, and drawing them to himself, and each

one when he finds the Lord will make a sweet singer to swell the tune of grace divine. Perhaps in this place there may even be some aged people whose voices are becoming feeble with lapse of years, who nevertheless will sing with their hearts most melodiously to the glory of the God of all longsuffering. Be they who they may, when they have found the Lord Jesus Christ, they must and will glorify the God of their salvation. So you see the great object of our Lord Jesus was that God might be praised, and he foreknew that this object would be effected by the praises of those who in seeking should find his grace.

This assurance which Christ here gives, that "they shall praise the Lord that seek him," ought to be very encouraging to all seekers; for, my dear friends, it were wise for you to seek the Lord even if you had no stronger hope than a mere "peradventure he will save us." It would be wise to do as the men of Nineveh did, to repent and turn to God, even if you had nothing better than "who can tell?" to encourage you in so doing; but since our Lord Jesus Christ in dying felt confident that seekers would find peace and joy, and so would come to praise God, we have double comfort. He could not have been mistaken, rest you sure of that; and therefore seekers shall have reasons for praising the Lord. It is from the fact that he died upon the cross that it becomes certain that the seeker shall be a finder. This it was which made him sustain the scorn of men, the faintness of fever, the darkness of death, and the horror of desertion, because he knew that his prostration in agony, and his yielding up the ghost, would render it certain that no seeking soul should ever seek the Lord in vain. Had there been no suffering Saviour there had been no way to God; had there been no dying Christ there had been no living consolation; but, now that his atoning work is accomplished, and he has said, "It is finished," they shall live that seek him, and their lives shall be spent in his praise.

The subject of this morning is the plain statement of the text, which I shall handle in all simplicity of speech. "They shall praise the Lord that seek him:" and you have here three things—the persons, the promise, and the praise.

I. Observe first of all THE PERSONS—"They shall praise the Lord that seek him." Notice how unrestricted the description of the persons is. It does not say certain persons who seek God, but any persons who seek him shall ultimately praise him; you, my friend, among the rest. None are excluded from the sweep of this precious promise, provided they are really seekers. In other matters many seek and but few find, but the rule of the gospel kingdom is "He that seeketh findeth," and the rule has no exceptions.

But what is meant by "seeking" the Lord? Who are the seekers to whom this promise is made? They include, first, *those who really desire to commune with God*. Some when they say a prayer are satisfied with the mere form, but he who really prays desires to converse with God in prayer; he longs that his desires should be heard by the Most High, and that he should obtain the needed blessings for which he asks. No devotion can ever satisfy a true heart but that which brings him into contact with the Most High. We do not seek fine words in prayer, we do not seek choice music in praise, we do not seek the church, we

seek God, and when any man is really aroused to seek after God, although he may know but very little yet of the true faith, he has a desire within him to which the Lord always gives an answer of peace. You may be a stranger and a foreigner, and you may have stepped in here, dear friend, quite ignorant of the doctrine and teaching of the Lord Jesus, but if in any nation any man shall really seek after the one only living and true God he shall receive further light, and shall ultimately come to praise the Lord.

Those who seek after God himself very soon *discover that they are at a distance from him*, so that one mark of a true seeker is that he is humbly conscious of his having gone astray from the Lord his God. What a man hath he doth not seek after, and what is close at hand is not an object of search; but when the man longeth after God there suddenly springeth up in his soul a consciousness that he has departed from the Most High, and so he crieth unto the Lord to remove the separating mountains, and to fill up the dividing valleys, and he that doeth this in very deed is the man who shall yet live to praise God.

The soul that is by the Holy Ghost made conscious of distance from God, if it be really seeking God, is *anxious that everything should be taken away which created the distance, and which keeps it apart from God*. If it be unpardoned sin, the true seeker longs for such forgiveness as God may justly give. If it be the power of sin in his members, the earnest seeker cries for power to overcome every thought of evil. The awakened soul soon becomes conscious that nothing separates it from God like the love of sin, and therefore it seeks to have sin slain, and lust crucified, and the enmity towards God for ever destroyed. O how we long to be delivered from every false way, from every pollution, and even from every appearance of evil which would tend to prevent our walking in happy fellowship with God. We know that two cannot walk together except they be agreed, and hence seeking after the Lord leads the soul to grieve over sin, and to strive with all its might with holy violence to break away from pernicious habits which bind it, and to tread under foot tendencies which would lead it astray. Are you conscious, dear friend, of such a seeking of God as this? Do you desire him as the weary watcher on the castle wall desires the morning light? Do you pray to have everything taken away from you which separates between you and your God? Do you long for someone to bridge the chasm and to bring you near to the Lord in spirit and in truth? If such be the case, the promise of the text is certainly yours. "They shall praise the Lord that seek him."

What the seeker longs for is that he may so approach the Lord as to *feel himself a friend of God*, and know that divine love is most surely all his own. Oh, the sweetness of knowing that there is nothing between God and you but amity and love, that all the sad past is forgiven and even blotted out of the Lord's remembrance, and that now you may speak to him without fear, and trust in him without dread. Atonement has removed his righteous wrath and settled fast his boundless love. Now you may come and lie in his bosom, for it is your Father's bosom; and hide even under the dark shadow of his wing, for it is your Father's wing, and it will cover you from all harm

even as a hen covereth her chickens. It is the prelude of heaven to feel that—

“The God that rules on high,
And thunders when he please,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas,
This awful God is ours.”

All his power is for our protection, all his wisdom for our direction, all his tenderness for our consolation, all his truth for our encouragement, all his grandeur for our ennobling, all the infinity of his nature for our eternal glorification. He wills that we should be partakers of the divine nature, and dwellers in the divine blessedness. This is very sweet, and this is what the soul that seeks God is following after. It aspires to walk with God, and to dwell with God; it longs to abide in him, to be for ever his beloved, to be accepted in Christ Jesus, and to become daily more and more conformed to the divine image. To be cleansed from everything which is alien to the design and the nature of God, and to be perfectly at one with God is our grand ambition. O beloved, this is a blessed longing for a soul to have; and he that hath it, though he may mourn and languish now, shall one day praise and bless God.

It may help you to discern whether you have such longings if I say that the man who really has them is in earnest to seek after God *now*. He hates the idea of postponement. A moment's delay to a seeking soul is a dreadful thought: he desires immediate salvation, he would be reconciled to God at once. As the hungry man does not wish the meal to be postponed, but would fain be fed directly, so in the true seeker; his heart and his flesh cry out after God, for the living God; even as the hart panteth after the water brooks so does his soul pant after God. This desire is abiding, and cannot be turned aside to another object. Not always can a man perceive this desire with equal vividness, because he is in the world, and his thoughts must be somewhat diverted by his ordinary business, and the cares thereof, but still the desire is always alive in his soul, and whenever the stress of worldly care is taken from his mind, his heart flies back to its longings, and begins again to sigh and cry after God. Such a man will break away from his fellows to plead with God alone; he will be praying without so much as the movement of his lips, even when he is in company. He will lie at night tossing on his bed, and saying, “Oh that I knew where I might find him!” he will wake in the morning with this desire strong upon him, and will seek after the Lord as one that searcheth for hid treasure. This desire hovers over the man who is subject to it, overshadows his being, and masters him completely: I have known it deprive food of its tastefulness and home of its comfort, and make the seeker cry, “Woe is me until I find my God: I draw near unto the gates of death until he appeareth. Let others ask for the increase of their corn and wine: Lord lift up the light of thy countenance upon me, for this and this only will content my soul.”

Now, beloved, all this seeking of the soul which I have feebly described, prepares a man for praising God when he finds mercy at the cross, as you will readily see upon reflection. This is the Holy Spirit's

way of tuning the harp for future psalmody. No man can praise God like the believer who has sought the Saviour, sorrowing as his mother and Joseph did in the days of his flesh, and at the last found him. The seeker knows the bitterness of sin, and therefore he can appreciate the sweetness of pardoning mercy. He has been made to know his own lost estate, and in consequence he will be the more rejoiced when he is found by the Good Shepherd and restored to his home by his Great Father. He knows his helplessness, no one knows it better, for he has tried the works of the law and failed, he has even tried prayer and gospel ordinances, and he has not succeeded in them so as to find rest unto his soul in them : he knows that he is broken in pieces, all asunder ; and therefore when he finds his help in the Lord Jesus, even he who feels himself to be such a helpless worm, what praises Christ will have, and what love in return for all his gracious aid ? The poor seeker has known in his own heart what he deserves at the hands of the law : he has had a glimpse of the world to come, and the terrors of judgment and the burnings of eternal wrath, and with the fire unquenchable scorching his very face, he must and will praise his deliverer, who has plucked him as a brand out of the burning. All his seeking, I say, helps him to prize divine mercy when he receives it, and trains him to praise God according to the promise of our text, "They shall praise the Lord that seek him." Never is a babe so dear to its mother as when it has just been restored from a sickness which threatened its life ; never does a father rejoice over his little child so much as when he has been long lost in the woods, and after a weary search is at last brought home. No gold is so precious to a man as that which he has earned by hard labour and self-denial : the harder he has toiled to gain it, the more rejoiced is he when at length he has enough to permit him to rest. No freedom is so precious as the new found liberty of a slave, no enlargement so joyous as that of one who has long been sitting in the valley of the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron. No return to a country is so full of delight as that of sorrowful exiles who come back from cruel Babylon, by whose waters they sat and wept, yea, wept when they remembered Zion. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like men that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing : then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." If there be any seekers here at this good hour, I hope that if they have seen themselves in the picture which I have outlined, they will still further be enabled to take heart and be of good courage. I am labouring this morning to drop words of consolation, even as the reapers, when Ruth came into the field of Boaz, let fall handfuls on purpose for her, that she might glean and return with a full portion.

II. Now we come to THE PROMISE—"They shall praise the Lord that seek him." Blessed promise ! It is gradually but surely fulfilled.

First, *it is fulfilled unconsciously while the man is seeking.* Did you ever think of this ? Without knowing it, the humble seeker is already praising God. That confession of sin which he made with so many tears was a glorifying of God by bearing witness to the justice of God's law and the truth of the charges which it brings against our fallen nature.

"My son," said Joshua even to Achan, "I pray thee give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him." There is a measure of true praise in confession, and it is as pure and real as that which angels present before the sapphire throne. The seeker when he acknowledges that he deserves to be sent to hell is, in fact, praising justice—he is adoring the Judge of all. Even though in so doing there is a mixture of unbelief and a forgetfulness of other attributes, yet there is a firm belief in divine justice, and a suppliant adoration of it which is far from being unacceptable. There is also in the seeker a measure of delight in God's mercy, for while the poor sin-smitten soul is craving for pardon it confesses heartily how sweet mercy is in itself if it might but obtain it, how gracious forgiveness is, how precious lovingkindness is if it might but be favoured with them. No living man has so keen an eye to the tender attributes of God as he whose soul is covered all over with wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, through a sense of sin. Meanwhile, the seeking soul is really praising the Lord Jesus by appreciating the preciousness of his love and the value of his blood, and saying within itself, "Oh that I might know the value of these in my own case! Oh that I could but touch the hem of his garment for myself! Would God I did but know what it is to be washed in his blood, and to be covered with his righteousness!" There is in all these emotions a measure of latent praise none the less accepted of the Lord because it is not perceived by man. There is a precious fragrance of deep reverence and holy awe about a seeker's prayers which render them sweet unto the Lord. So, you see, the seeker is already praising God, and thus in a measure the promise is fulfilled.

But the praise exceedingly abounds when the desire is granted. As a bird lies hidden among the heather, but is seen when at last it is startled and made to take to the wing, so doth praise take to the wing and display itself when at last those who seek the Lord are permitted to find him. What thunderclaps of praise come from poor sinners when they have just found their all in all in God in the person of Christ Jesus. Then their joy becomes almost too much for them to hold, vastly too much for them to express. Oh, the praises, the day and night praises, the continuous praises, which rise from the returning, repenting soul which has at last felt the Father's arms around its neck and the Father's warm kisses on its cheek, and is sitting down at the table where the happy household eat and drink and are merry. Praising time has come indeed when finding time has arrived. Happy day! Happy day! when we meet with God in Jesus Christ.

Now, dear soul, the promise secures that you shall find God in Christ, because the promise is that you shall praise him, and you cannot praise him until you have found his grace and favour in Christ. Therefore I am sure you will enjoy salvation ere long. Oh, it is not to be thought of that a soul should seek after God and not find him. Imagine the penitent prodigal son seeking after his father, reaching his father's house, searching in the chambers of his father's mansion, going abroad into his father's fields, and crying, "My father, my father, I have lost thee; wilt thou not be found of me?" and doing this by the month and the year together, and not finding his father after all. There is no such parable as that in Holy Writ, nor could there be one, it would

not be Godlike or Christlike. There is nothing like it, as a matter of fact, nor shall there ever be, except where unbelief comes in and wickedly misrepresents the Lord. My God, in thy universe thou thinkest of everything : the beast hath its lair and the sea bird hath its home ; the fish findeth its food, and even the insect hath a table provided for it ; and as for thy poor creature man, though greatly erring, thou dost not forget him ; but thou hast made us wonder that thou art so mindful of him, that thou hast such tender regard unto him, and dost visit him so graciously. It is not possible that any one of all thy creatures should be seeking after thee like a child that cries after its mother in the dark, and not find thee after all. Thou art not far from any of us.

God may try you, he may let you wait a while before he grants to you the comforts of realized pardon ; there may be that about you, especially that unbelief about you, which prevents your finding him, but found of you he must be and he shall be before long. Which of you hath a child who hath offended but who with many tears comes to you and saith, " My father, forgive " ; and will you not forgive ? You know that for a while you may chide and say, " The offence is great, it has been oft repeated ; I cannot readily pass by it this time ; " but if you see your child still weeping and still with broken heart imploring your favour, do not your bowels yearn over him ? do you not long to say, " My child, I have forgiven and forgotten your fault ? " You know you do ; and if you, being evil, know how to forgive your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give pardon and free grace to them that seek him. You *shall* praise the Lord that seek him. Lay hold on that promise.

Well, and when you have found him to the joy of your heart, the promise of the text shall be fulfilled in a third sense, *for you shall go on seeking and you shall go on praising*. Seeking the Lord is sometimes used in Scripture as the *alias* for true religion, and it very aptly describes it, for our life consists in endeavouring to know the Lord yet more and more. Now, since Christ has died, true religion is praise. The genius of the Christian religion is joy, its proper spirit is delight, and its highest exercise is praise. " They shall praise the Lord that seek him." Now we go up to the house of the Lord with the congregation of the faithful with songs of holy joy : now we draw near to the feast of communion at the Lord's table with delight, and ere we depart we sing a hymn ; now we go forth to the good fight of faith, and our battle song is a jubilant psalm ; now do we even go to our beds of painful sickness and sing the Lord's high praises there. Since Jesus died our heaviness is dead ; our murmuring is buried in his tomb. Since Jesus endured the wrath of God, which was due to us, that wrath has passed away for ever, and it is now the privilege, nay, the duty of every Christian to rejoice in the Lord. Let all the people praise him, and let the redeemed of the Lord be foremost in the joy.

Nor is this all. There cometh another day, and another state, when we shall be in another place, and then we shall praise the Lord, even we who seek him. *Every soul that has sought God on earth shall see him and delight in him in heaven*. What praises will you and I pour forth then ! There are reasons why I consider myself to have been the greatest debtor to God of any man that ever lived ; I can see special undeservings

in my own case, and special mercies on the part of God towards me. I challenge you all to bear witness that I am under bond to praise the name of the Lord more ardently than you, because I am more deeply indebted to his grace. Each one of you, I have no doubt, enter into the same vein of thought, and not without reason. You will each feel as if you had the most cause to magnify his blessed name when you find yourself seated among the blood-washed, and in your hands the palm branch of eternal victory. Oh, what a song shall go up then; what "shouts of them that triumph, and songs of them that feast" shall make heaven's high arches ring in that glad day when "they shall praise the Lord that seek him."

What a promise this is. I leave it in your hands, only remarking that it takes the most delightful shape possible, because if you are a true seeker the thing you want above all things is to be able to glorify God; you desire to be pardoned, and to be renewed in heart with this object, that you may be able to render acceptable praise to him whom you have offended. Well, that is the very blessing which is promised you, "They shall praise the Lord that seek him," and it includes, of course, the removal from your heart of everything that would prevent your praising him, and the breaking down of every barrier that would keep you back from joining yon celestial choirs who, day without night, with their eternal symphonies circle his throne rejoicing.

III. Thirdly, THE PRAISE. "They shall praise the Lord that seek him." What will the praise be about? What will be the subject of the song? Ah, now I have before me an utterly endless task if I am to catalogue the subjects of praise for a seeking soul when it has found peace with God. Why, beloved, *we praise him to think that we found him as we did*. Some of you found him so readily, you only heard a sermon and that one sermon led you to Christ. Others of us did not find him so soon or so easily, and yet we found him at the very nick of time. Just when we were going to lie down in despair, when Satan suggested that no hope remained, then man's extremity was God's opportunity, and we found the Lord exactly to the tick of the clock, at the best moment. Blessed be his name! Oh, to find him at all! How great a boon! If a man should lie a thousand years in the prison of despair, yet if he did but find Christ at last it were worth while to have suffered the thousand years of daily death. If we may but at last say, "My God, my God," with unfaltering tongue, and a heart that feels itself reconciled to him, we shall make it our heaven to praise him with all our might.

The chief point of praise, perhaps, with most saved ones is *that they found such a Saviour*. Our Lord is represented as on the cross when he utters this promise, "They shall praise the Lord that seek him," and when we find the Lord we always find him in Christ upon the cross, and the atonement becomes a chief feature in our joy. Do you recollect the first time you had a view by faith of the incarnate God bearing human sin, when that grand doctrine of substitution flashed on your soul like the first sight of the sun to a man that had been blind? Do you remember when you first really knew that God did lay on Christ your iniquities, and that he was punished instead of you, so that you cannot by any possibility be punished, for it were unjust twice to exact the

penalty for one offence? Did you ever get the glory of that light concentrated on your soul, so that you knew of a surety that God for Christ's sake had forgiven you, and justly forgiven you, because of the blood of Jesus? Did you ever drink in the meaning of those words, "faithful and just to forgive us our sins?" Then I know after the first overwhelming impression of intense delight you did praise God, ay, and you have not left off doing so, for there is enough in that one simple fact to set you praising God throughout the ages of eternity. Salvation by substitution so satisfies the conscience that it fills the heart with overflowing delight.

"The love I prize is righteous love,
Inscribed on the sin-bearing tree;
Love that exacts the sinner's debt,
Yet, in exacting sets him free.

"Love that condemns the sinner's sin,
Yet, in condemning, pardon seals;
That saves from righteous wrath, and yet
In saving, righteousness reveals.

"This is the love that calms my heart,
That soothes each conscience-pang within,
That pacifies my guilty dread,
And frees me from the power of sin."

Oh, to think that such an one as Jesus should be our Saviour, that heaven's Darling should condescend to assume our nature, and become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, that he should live such a life and die such a death, that he should present to God a work so perfect, without flaw, without excess! Is there not room for praises here? Now we are as clean before the Lord, because we have been washed in Christ's blood, yea, we are as pure as if we had never sinned, and standing arrayed in Christ's righteousness, we are more righteous even than Adam before the fall, for he had only a human righteousness, but we have a righteousness divine. In Christ Jesus, the second Adam, we are nearer to God than if we had been born of Adam the first while untainted by sin. Now, there is a man who is akin to God, even Jesus our brother, who is also very God of very God. Man is exalted to the highest conceivable degree in the person of Jesus Christ, and we have become heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ. As the seeking soul learns more and more of this it praises God more and more. Is it not so? Does not your soul bless the Saviour? Yea, and the longer we live, and the more we know about the Lord the more we find causes for extolling him; indeed, everything around us, within us, and above us seems to suggest a reason for blessing his name.

Think of *our security* at this moment, and again praise God. Many a song has been poured from my soul as I have remembered that my Lord has given me a life that cannot die; that he has written me on his heart, from whence my name can never be erased; that he has made a covenant with me to which he has pledged his honour and his word, and sealed it with his blood; that I am his child, and that he never did and never can tear from his heart's love even the least of his children; that the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but the covenant of his peace can never be removed, for so hath he declared.

"My name from the palms of his hands,
Eternity cannot erase ;
Impressed on his heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace.

"Yes, I to the end shall endure.
As sure as the earnest is given ;
More happy but not more secure
The glorified spirits in heaven."

There is abundant raw material for praise in all this : where can you find better ? "They shall praise the Lord that seek him."

Brethren, *we see cause for praise in the very fact that we ever sought the Lord at all.* Think what it was which made us seek him : what but sovereign grace ? What bedewed our eye with the first tear of repentance ? What fetched from our soul the first sigh of desire after Christ ? What, I say, but grace ? And whence came that grace but from his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus or ever the world was ? And whence that purpose but from his divine sovereignty, even as it is written, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Therefore let us glorify his holy name, and think not of works or merits, or anything in man that could have won for us the love of the Most High : boasting is excluded, but praise is secured. Give all the glory to his holy name for ever and for ever, and let the text stand true in your case, "They shall praise the Lord that seek him."

Our final thought on this occasion shall be, if these things be so, let us praise the Lord, even we who have sought him. If our poor friends the seekers are soon to bless his name, let us show them the way. We sought and we found ; let us magnify the Lord at once. Do you think we praise our heavenly Father half enough ? Do we not rob him of his glory by getting down in the dumps, and giving way to care and perhaps to murmuring ? This is not the right spirit for a Christian man. Where there is so much undeserved mercy there ought to be more grateful joy. Do you think we are demonstrative enough in our praise ? I am sure we are not. Few around us would ever dream that we were half as favoured as we are. Do we sing one-tenth as much as Christians ought to sing ? We hum over a tune now and then very quietly, but we are terribly afraid of being heard and of annoying people. I do not find the giddy world much afraid of annoying us with their songs ; do they not wake us up at night with their lewd discords ? If we were half as earnest as we ought to be, we should sometimes at least make the streets ring with the praises of God. It would be well to be a little indiscreet occasionally, and now and then provoke the charge of fanaticism, for this would be a proof of earnest sincerity. Once at least in our lives we should let our Lord ride through the streets again in public triumph amid our own most hearty enthusiasm, till Pharisees rebuke us and say, "Hearest thou what these say ?"

"Oh, for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break ;
And all harmonious human tongues
Their Saviour's praises speak."

Yes, and all inharmonious tongues too. Let all creatures that have breath praise the Lord.

"Yes we will praise thee dearest Lord,
Our souls are all on flame.
Hosanna round the spacious earth
To thine adored name!"

May the Lord set our hearts on fire; may we be full of exulting praise; marching on with hosannahs and hallelujahs, magnifying, praising, and extolling the Lord, whom we sought in the hour of trouble, and whom we found in the day of his grace.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—563, 775, 548.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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A SECOND WORD TO SEEKERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 10TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."—Jeremiah xxix. 13.

LAST Sabbath morning* we gave forth words of good cheer to those who seek the Lord, dwelling upon those encouraging words of the Saviour upon the cross, "They shall praise the Lord that seek him." We aimed only at the one point of encouraging seekers, for a single object is always enough for one discourse, and the impression made is the more likely to be permanent: we had neither time nor desire to qualify our language with discriminating remarks, which would help to show who are true seekers and who are not. One cannot reap and winnow with the same machine. I think it therefore right that we should follow up that discourse by another in which we shall discern between those who truly seek and those who only nominally seek the Lord. Such discrimination will be useful in many ways. Perhaps, dear friend, after last Lord's-day you said, "I do not understand this promise that seekers shall praise God, for I have been seeking for these months but I have not been able to praise him yet. Surely the promise cannot be true of me." Rest assured, dear friend, that the promise is true to you if you are true to it. The word of the Lord is sure, there can be no question upon that point; the questions to be raised must deal with yourself and your searching, either you do not seek or else you do seek amiss. Always conclude that if a general promise does not turn out to be true in your particular instance there is something in you that hinders it. You must have fallen short of the character to which the promise is made; the promise itself cannot be suspected. "Let God be true and every man a liar." You may account for your not obtaining the blessing which you have asked upon any theory which humbles yourself, but you must never suppose that the Lord will break his promise, for that were to dishonour his holy

* See Sermon, No. 1,312. "Good News for Seekers."
No. 1,313.

name, deny his faithfulness, and pour contempt upon his truth. If his good word appear to fail towards thee, is there not a cause? Does not sin lie at the door? Is there not some idol in the inner chamber which must be searched for and taken away? "Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee?" It is a general truth that proper food will build up the human frame, but if food be eaten, and yet no nourishment whatever is obtained from it, we conclude that the system is thrown out of order by some inward disease. The meat is good, it must therefore be the stomach or some other organ that aileth, and turneth that which is good into evil. If a fire be kindled, and a person be placed close to it, and yet he declares that he is not warmed by the heat, we do not because of this entertain any doubt of the power of fire to warm the human body, but we conclude that the man has an ague or some other malady, which prevents his feeling the natural warmth of the fire. The failure of warmth cannot lie in the fire, it must be in the man, for fire must warm any healthy limbs which are held near to it. If a medicine which has been known to produce a cure in hundreds of cases be taken by an individual, and it be found to have no result, or to work in a manner contrary to its natural and ordinary effect, we conclude that either the state of the case has been badly judged, or that there is present some other potent drug which neutralises its effect. The man himself may not be aware that he is eating or imbibing that which acts in an opposite direction to the prescription of his physician, and yet it may be so; and, therefore, the medicine is not to be distrusted, but the interposing substance must bear all the blame. For this reason we will try this morning to discriminate a little, with no wish whatever to grieve any seeking soul, but with a strong desire to indicate any weak point in the seeking, any counteracting habit which may be at this time preventing the soul from entering at once into the peace and joy for which it is seeking. "He that seeketh findeth" is an indisputable fact; but, as all is not gold that glitters so all is not seeking which bears the name.

We come at once to our point by noticing *the quality required in every true seeker*. The verse tells us—"Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Whole-heartedness is the quality required. Secondly, we shall show *the reasons why whole-heartedness is required*; and, thirdly, *indicate one or two of the main hindrances to it*, which we pray the Lord to remove.

I. THE QUALITY REQUIRED IN THE SEEKER is whole-heartedness: he must search for the Lord with all his heart. This means, I take it, three things.

First, in order to find the Lord there must be *an undivided object in the seeker's mind*. See how the text runs—"Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." The object is one and only one. The sinner is at a distance from God, and guilt divides him from his God: he longs to draw near to the heavenly Father and to be reconciled; he therefore seeks after God, and God alone. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." "O that I knew where I might find HIM!" Now, the Lord is to be found by the guilty only in Christ Jesus, who is the mercy-seat where God meets sinners and hears their prayers. It is there that the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth

bodily, and there the fulness of divine grace and truth are stored up so that we may receive of it. We must turn our eye, then, to God in Christ Jesus, and keep the eye fixed there. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." If the eye be not single towards Christ and in desire of salvation through him, it will be no wonder if we seek for mercy, but seek in vain. How can a man run in two ways at the same time? Brother, thou must shake off from thee all trust in *self*, for God will have none of it. Thou must not seek God by the works of the law, or by any supposed merit that is or ever can be in thyself, for this he utterly refuseth. If thou attempt to mix law with gospel, self with Christ, and merit with mercy, thou wilt certainly miss thy aim: thy whole soul must concentrate itself upon this—to find God as he is revealed in Christ, a God of grace and love, the God who justifieth the ungodly when he looks upon the merit of his Son, and sees the sinner's confidence in him.

Thou must so seek the Lord as to make no provision for the lusts of the flesh and the desires of the mind. If it cost thee the giving up of every pleasure that thou hast, yet in searching after the Lord thou must seek him so entirely that thou wouldst cut off right arms and pluck out right eyes sooner than thou shouldst miss him and so miss eternal life. However sweet the sin may have been to thy palate thou must cast it out of thy mouth, for it is as poisonous as it is pleasant, and therefore it is to be put away far from thee. "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," for if thou do thou hast not sought the Lord with all thy heart. There must be one object, and that must be neither self nor *sin*, but thou must feel and say, "in God is my salvation, and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God, therefore with strong desire do I follow after the Lord, even the Lord alone."

Moreover, there must be no reservations made in this search to gratify *pride* in any of its shapes. If thou sayest within thy heart, "I will only accept mercy if it come to me in a certain way," thou puttest thyself out of all hope of grace, for God is a sovereign, and will do as he wills with his own. Some will not have Christ without signs and wonders: they demand singular experiences, horrible depressions, or delirious excitements, and they will not believe unless some marvellous thing be wrought in them or before them. Thou must make no conditions with God, either of this or of any other kind. Thou shalt find him if thou wilt seek him, without bargains and terms and demands, for what art thou that thou shouldst demand anything of thy Maker, and lay down rules and regulations for the dispensing of a mercy to which thou hast no claim? Come as thou art, poor sinner, and without any reservation submit thyself to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, only desiring this one thing—that thou mayest find God and his love in Christ Jesus.

"Lord, deny me what thou wilt,
Only ease me of my guilt;
Suppliant at thy feet I lie,
Give me Christ, or else I die."

Thou shalt find the Lord to be thine help and thy salvation, if thou seek him as the one sole object of thy desire. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after."

The phrase "with all thy heart" means, next, *with the entire faculties of our being*. A man must seek after God in Christ Jesus with his entire nature. David said, "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee." If one part of the man refuses to seek the Lord, and remains reserved for Satan, then the evil one has a lien upon the whole man. Here is a little bird, and it tries to fly into the open air, but it is not free. And why not? Its wings are loose, see how it flutters; its head is not bound, hear how it sings; and this foot is free, too—why is it not at liberty? Do you not perceive that the other leg is bound by a thin twine? True, it is only held by that single thread, but yet it is not free. The whole bird is bound, because that one foot is held by that single thread; and so long as a man of free choice gives up any part of himself to the power of sin, and keeps back any part of his nature from seeking after God, he is not really seeking the Lord at all, but remains a slave of sin. O man, if thou wouldst find God, set thy faculties upon the search, marshal thy powers, muster thy forces, and let thy entire nature, body, soul, and spirit, search after Jesus Christ, as the merchantman seeketh goodly pearls. Set thy thoughts at work, and let them search the Scriptures. Arouse thine understanding and endeavour to comprehend thy danger and to know thy remedy. Set thy wits to work: let thy ingenuity and thy research be brought to bear on heavenly things, for mayhap when thou dost understand the gospel thou wilt believe and have peace. An enlightened judgment is a great help towards faith. Many a man remains without peace because his understanding has never been exercised upon the gospel and divine things, but if he would think them over, meditate upon them and ponder them in his heart, by the enlightening of the sacred Spirit new light would flash into his soul, and he would see and believe. "Understandest thou what thou readest?" is an important question, and suggests that in the search after salvation the understanding should be called into play. Do not expect to be saved as dumb driven cattle, but as a reasonable man, and therefore use thy reason and understanding upon divine things, asking the Lord to teach thy reason right reason, and to give thine understanding a right understanding of his word.

It will be well for a man in seeking the Lord to use his *memory* and his *conscience*. Let him go over the list of his past sins, and recall the wanderings of his heart, the follies of his tongue, the iniquities of his hand. Mayhap memory will call up conscience, and become the mother of repentance. The recollection of the sinful past will by the Spirit's grace create a penitent present. Forget not, I pray thee, to remember thy former days, for God requireth that which is past. Remember, too, what God has done by way of mercy to others. Think of friends and companions saved. Remember the grand old records of inspiration: turn to the Bible and see how God has saved seeking souls, and your memory may thus beget faith in you by the work of the Spirit of God. The text bids you search "with all your heart," and your memory, as one of the faculties of your mind, should assist in the search.

As for thy *will*, how needful that this also be captured and compelled to join heartily in the pursuit. It is a stubborn thing and will not readily bend, but how canst thou expect to find mercy if thou art not willing to submit to God's rebukes, and accept his methods of salvation?

Bring forth my Lord Will-be-Will and let grace cause him to submit himself. Though he was once Lord Mayor of Mansoul, he must bare his neck to the yoke of Christ, and own that the will of the Lord is higher than man's will. Make him say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." As to every other faculty that thou hast, if thou be indeed in earnest, let it be aroused. Leave not a single part of thy nature behind thee when thou comest to God, but seek him with thy whole heart, with intense eagerness and strong desire. "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

I have now given you two meanings for the phrase, to seek the Lord with all our heart: it indicates an undivided object and the entireness of our faculties in the search. But, thirdly, it signifies mainly *aroused energy*. "When ye shall search for me with all your heart ye shall find me." It includes the getting out of that dull, sluggish, indifferent spirit which seems so common. Indifference to eternal realities seems to impregnate the very air we breathe in this sleepy world—sleepy I mean as to things spiritual and divine. We are busy about a thousand things, but sluggish about our souls. Yet be not deceived, if men are to be saved it will not be accomplished while they slumber, nor will mercy be found by listless, careless, lackadaisical search after it. No, when the Spirit of God sets a man searching he becomes earnest, intense, fervent, vehement, and strives to enter in at the strait gate, "for the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." He who would be saved must be resolved to escape from the wrath to come. It must come to this with thee—that thou wilt not rest till thou findest Christ and life eternal; for thou canst not endure to be damned, and therefore thou art determined that if there be on earth or in heaven any remedy for thy soul's sickness, thou wilt have it if seeking can obtain it. When the Lord hath made thee thus resolute thou wilt need to have perseverance, to follow hard after him till thou hast beheld his face in peace. If thou hast once read the Scriptures to find Christ in them, thou wilt read them again and again, and dig the field of the word over ten times till thou findest the hidden treasure. If thou hast once prayed for grace and peace thou wilt pray again and again, and again, and again, till thy knees be horny rather than thou wilt miss the blessing. If thou hast heard the word preached many times and yet it has not brought peace to thy soul, thou wilt be early and late in thy waiting at the posts of Jehovah's doors to hear those glad tidings of which it is written, "Hear, and your soul shall live." There will be in your spirit a determination that cannot be shaken, a desire which cannot be appeased. We must be importunate, like the widow with the unjust judge, or the man at midnight with his friend, for importunity prevails. "Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the Lord." If you cannot rest till you receive the kiss of pardon, you shall soon obtain it. If you cannot be easy until you are taken into the Father's house and

owned to be his child, you shall soon rejoice in the adoption. May the Lord be pleased to arouse all seekers to passionate earnestness, for when they are filled with travail of soul they shall obtain mercy. If you are content to go without salvation you shall go without it, but if your soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for it, you shall have it.

There are some poor souls who will, perhaps, be distressed with these remarks upon energetic seeking. They are constitutionally weak and feeble in all that they feel and do, and therefore they will say, "Alas, Sir, I am afraid I never was so earnest as you describe. I am a poor feeble soul, and very low in spirit. I fear I have no such eagerness and energy." No, dear trembler, and I would not have you misunderstand me, for the force I am now commending is not physical, but spiritual, and rather that of weakness than of strength. Hast thou not heard that once upon a time two knocks were given at mercy's door, and he who kept the door opened to one in an instant, but to the other there was no reply. The knock to which the door was opened was but a gentle one, and scarcely could be heard by those outside the gate, yet it evidently struck some secret spring upon the door, for the sound thereof thundered along the palace halls. The second knock was very loud, and was heard by all who stood around the door, but it commanded no answer from within. Then he who thus had knocked marvelled, and enquired of him that kept the gate and said, "How is it that I have knocked so loudly and yet have not entered, while the trembling woman whose knock was very soft and low obtained immediate admittance?" Then he that kept the door answered, "She who knocked so feebly, yet knocked with all her might. Her strength was little, but *it was all she had*, and therefore it sounded powerfully within these palace walls. As for thee, thou hast put forth much energy, but it was not thine all, and therefore is there no response to thee. Take thou the hammer of the gate with both thy hands, and throw thy whole soul into each blow, and see if the door do not yield thee admittance." He did so, the gate flew open to him, and he entered into the place which his feeble sister had already gained. If thou seek God with all thy heart, be thy heart strong or feeble, thou shalt find him.

II. Secondly, we have to consider **THE REASON FOR THIS REQUIREMENT**. The requirement is so natural that it needs no excusing, it must recommend itself to every thoughtful person; but since it may help us to be earnest if we are told why it is required of us, I would answer first, that *in every other pursuit where the object is at all worthy of a man's efforts, whole-heartedness is required*. I knew a man who had a business, but if you called to see him upon any matter you seldom found him within: he was taking a holiday, or else he had not risen. He made an appointment with you, but he never kept it, or came in so late that you were weary with waiting. Commissions that he was entrusted with were often left unexecuted by the week together, or attended to in a slovenly manner. Do you wonder that when I passed by his shop one day I saw the shutters up, and learned that he had failed? Do you not know that success in life depends upon earnestness in it? Do you not teach your sons this important lesson? And if it be so in the lower things of this mortal life, how much more is it in the matters of the world to come? No man becomes learned by sleeping with a book for

his pillow, or famous by slumbering at the foot of the ladder of honour. You find everywhere that the kingdom of this world suffers violence, and never more so than in these days of increasing competition. Surely you cannot expect that if you must run for this world you may creep and win the next! No, no, thou shalt find the Lord, seeker, if thou seek him with all thy heart, but not else. Spiritual sluggards shall starve; labour, therefore, for the meat which endureth to eternal life.

The danger from which we need to escape is so great that the utmost earnestness is none too much. Consider for a moment the imminence of your peril and the overwhelming nature of it. The unsaved man lies under the wrath of God, and if any man did but know what the wrath of God is, he would think Nebuchadnezzar's furnace to be cool compared with that burning oven. He is in instant danger of death and of the judgment, and of that second death which follows on the heels of condemnation and consists in banishment from the presence of God and the glory of his power. Oh, if a man did but know while he lived what it is to die—if he could but guess what it is to stand before God's bar, and if he could have an inkling of what it must be to be cast where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched—this would surely make him seek the Lord with all his heart. O man, if thou wert in a burning house thou wouldst be eager to get out of it; if there seemed a probability that thou wouldst sink in a river thou wouldst struggle desperately to get to shore, how is it then that thou art so little moved by the peril of thy soul? Man is aroused when his life is once known to be in peril, how much more earnest ought he to be when eternal life or eternal death are the solemn alternative "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God!"

Look, moreover, at *the greatness of the mercy* which thou art seeking. It is none other than pardon of all thy sins, perfect righteousness in Christ Jesus, safety through his precious blood, adoption into the family of God, and eternal enjoyment of the presence of God in heaven. They that seek for pearls, and gold, and precious stones, use all their eyes and all their wits, but what are those gaudy toys compared with these immortal treasures? How ought a man to seek after heaven and eternal life? Should it not be with all his heart?

Recollect that in this matter *everybody else is in earnest*. Poor seeker, every one that thou hast to do with in this matter is in earnest. Look down on hell's domain and see how earnest Satan is to hold thee and to ruin thee! How diligently the enemy baits his hooks and sets his traps to catch the souls of men! How does he compass sea and land to hold his captives lest they escape. See how earnest on the other hand Christ is! He proved his earnestness by a life of toil by day and of prayer by night; by hunger, and thirst, and faintness, and bloody sweat. The zeal of God's house had eaten him up; he was earnest even to the death for sinners. And God is in earnest: there is no mockery with him, or carelessness or indifference about human souls. When he speaks of the sinner's perishing, he cries out with a solemn oath that he hath no pleasure in their death; but if they to the last refuse his love and defy his justice he will not trifle with them, but will judge in earnest and punish in earnest. Has he not said, "Beware therefore, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

The majesty of his power is revealed in flaming wrath against transgressors; hell is no trifle, and his wrath is no small matter. Heaven and hell, then, are in earnest, and so must you be if you would find salvation. Shall we who have to tell you to escape from the wrath to come pray to be in earnest, and shall we never feel earnest enough, but always cry that we may be seized with a yet more intense passion for your welfare; and shall it seem to you to be a common-place affair—a thing that you may let alone and let happen as it may? Oh, sirs, if you talk so, the madness of sin is very manifest in you; may the Lord make you sane.

Where everything is in earnest be in earnest too. *You have been earnest enough and whole-hearted enough in the ways of sin.* Think of yourself as engrossed with those things whereof you ought to be ashamed. Have you not been earnest indeed there? Concerning this world you have risen up early, and sat up late, and eaten the bread of carefulness. When you went into sin, did you not sin with both your hands? Perhaps I speak to some here who could never sin enough. When they were in company they were ahead of all others—ringleaders in every sort of wickedness. It was not enough for them to be as common sinners, but they were known by everybody to be the boldest and most dare-devil of all the crew. They led the van in the march to hell. And, sirs, are you going to manifest all that earnestness in reviling and rebelling against God, and is there to be no warmth, no ardour, no strong excitement of your nature when you seek the Lord and his grace? Think of this, and chide your laggard steps!

Besides, look ye, sirs, *how can there be anything true about your seeking if it is not whole-hearted?* Here is a man who almost repents of his sin, or half repents of it. Does not that mean that he does not repent of it at all? How can there be repentance of a deed to which half the heart is still wedded? If only half the heart seemeth to be separated from sin, it is but a seeming; the man's whole heart in truth still loves his sin. And how can there be half-hearted faith? He that half believeth, believeth not at all. If thou sayest, "I almost believe," where is thy faith? "If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest" be baptized and added to the church; but if thou believest half-heartedly, what sort of faith is this? For a man half to turn from sin and half to turn to God, is that conversion? Nay, he has not turned to God who has turned but half to God. He abideth where he was, only probably he has added hypocrisy to his other sins. He who leaves half his heart behind him when he comes to God comes not at all. "Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty."

See ye yet again, my brethren, ye that are seeking the Lord; there must be whole-heartedness in your seeking, because *that which you seek if you obtain it is a whole-hearted thing.* Hear how true Christians pray. Do they pray with half their hearts? Nay, for one saith, "with my whole heart have I sought thee." So say all the saints. They know that if they ask in a chilly style they are asking to be denied, and therefore they besiege heaven with all the power of prayer. They knock and knock again with fervour and importunity when they would obtain what they need. They say with wrestling Jacob, "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me." Prayer is the vital breath of the Christian,

and if he cannot pray without whole-heartedness, then it is clear that to have spiritual life, you, O seeker, must give all your heart to it.

Obedience to God in the believer is whole-hearted. What saith David? "I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart." There is no doing the will of God with half a heart. That would be such an obedience as he could not in any way accept. It would be a sign of formality and hypocrisy, but not of sincerity. Genuine Christians *love* God with all their heart. What is the demand of the old law, but "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul"? To love God with half your heart would be another name for not loving God at all. Love to God is the proof and test of a believer, but how canst thou have it if even in thy seeking thy heart is divided? When believers *praise* God, they do it in the style of the psalmist who said, "I will praise thee, O God, with my whole heart." What other songs can have music in them to the ears of the God of truth? Vain must all ten-stringed instruments be if the heart praise not. "Unite my heart to fear thy name," said the holy man; and we must pray the same, for the Christian life is impossible without wholeness of heart.

Only imagine for a moment that I were permitted to come here and say to you sinners, "God is very easily entreated, and if you seek him, no matter in what cold and careless way, he will be found of you. You may be half asleep, but yet so long as there is a little desire in your soul, it will go well with you; you need not be very earnest or specially prayerful, or whole-hearted: you may take it very easy, it will all go well with you." What pretty preaching that would be! Some might like it, but what sort of Christians should we produce by it? Even when we preach earnestness, a great number of professors are drowsy enough; but what would they be if we had such a slumbering gospel as this to preach? I have known persons go to sleep in the house of prayer when the seats have been hard; but suppose we provided pillows for all arm-holes, and downy cushions for drowsy heads, who would wonder if you all went to sleep? What sort of a church should we build up if we did not bid the enquirer seek with his whole heart, but urged him to be indifferent from the very first? Have I not reduced the whole thing to an absurdity; and do you not see at once that there must be a seeking of the Lord with all your heart if indeed you are ever to find him. May the divine Spirit, who comes as a rushing mighty wind and as a consuming fire, come upon all wavering hearts at this hour, and cause them to be eager after the things which make for their peace.

III. I am going to mention, in the third place, one or two of THE HINDRANCES, which stand in the way of a sincere, whole-hearted, persevering search after the Lord and his salvation.

I verily believe that a principal hindrance is presumption. The ungodly say within themselves, "God is very merciful and ready to forgive. We like to hear the preacher set forth the abundant mercy of God; we are pleased to hear him show how willing the Father is to forgive, and how he delights to receive returning prodigals." Yes, and after saying this you continue in sin: your mean, dastardly, worse than brutish heart resolves to sin because God is merciful! I know not how to find adjectives sufficiently strong to set forth the degradation of a nature which can multiply offences because the offended one is of a

forgiving spirit. How worse than brutish are they who say, "Because God is so merciful, therefore we will go on in sin!" Are you not ashamed of yourselves? I am sure I am ashamed of you that such a thought should ever dwell in your mind. It is so ungrateful, so ungenerous—I was going to say, it is so devilish; but the devil himself has never been so guilty, for he has never had any hope of mercy. To sin because of mercy is a step lower than even the devil has descended. Because God is merciful, therefore you will not seek his mercy, but will continue in sin. Ah, be ashamed and be confounded! You hear us continually say that whosoever believeth in Jesus is not condemned: and you say to yourself in the secret of your heart, "This is very easy. Only believe, and you shall be saved; simply put your confidence in Christ," and from this you take license to go on in sin. Let me put this to you again that you may see the meanness of such a course. Do you say, "Because the way of salvation is so simple, therefore I will not attend to it at present. Any day will do. I will put it off"? Oh, man, can it be that thou hast fallen so low as this? Oh, the deep depravity of thy spirit, that if God be so ready to forgive, thou art, therefore, all the more unready to be forgiven; and because he puts it on such easy terms, thou dost therefore turn upon thy heel and refuse his love. What is this but virtually to crucify Christ afresh by sinning because he is gracious? What is this but mocking him and spitting in his face by refusing his salvation because it is so free? Oh, do not so! Be not so unmanly, so cruel to thyself, and so ungenerous to the Christ of God. "Ah," says one, "a few words of prayer at last will do."

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

Ah, I have often wondered how men can venture to speak thus within themselves. They seldom talk like that to others, because they dare not; but they flatter themselves in secret. How do you know that you will have the few minutes in which to utter those pious words? "God be merciful to me a sinner" may be more than you will be able to say. Beware, lest he take thee away with a stroke, for then thou wilt not be able to raise even the shortest prayer. Some have been smitten down in their sins, and those have been the very men who said, "Anytime will do; I can turn to God when I please, and make my peace with him." Many men have fallen from a height, or been killed on the railway, or drowned at sea, or seized with an apoplectic fit, and their souls have stood in all their naked shame before the bar of God to answer for their ungodly speeches. Presumption upon the mercy of God is the reason why so many wrap themselves up in the garments of carnal security, and put far from them the evil day. God deliver you from this great evil!

Secondly, many are hindered, I doubt not, by *remains of self-confidence*. If they knew that they could not save themselves they would be in earnest to seek after God and his righteousness; but they still harbour some vain notion that there must be at least a little good thing about them; at least a spark, and a great fire may come from a spark. They never were as bad as some—they were not swearers or drunkards, they have never plunged into actual lust and defiled themselves with uncleanness. Somewhere or other they have hoarded up a little store of native

goodness, and upon this they dote in a timorous, half suspicious way, and therefore they do not cry out to God with the energy of those who must find mercy in Christ or be for ever lost. He who thinks that he can swim will never seize the life buoy with the clutch of a drowning man. How fierce is the grasp of a man who is drowning, and knows that his fast hold is his only chance! How he clutches, as if his fingers should be made to meet through a deal board. When a man feels that nothing is left him but God in Christ, then with earnestness he seizes upon the hope set before him.

I am afraid that some are hindered by a very opposite evil, namely, *despair*. Ah! some of you do not believe that you can be forgiven, you fancy that you never can be God's people. If you were quite sure that you could obtain perfect peace with God—if you knew that ere the sun goes down to-day, you might have the bright eye which looks up to heaven, and says, "There is a throne there for me," and the placid heart that feels perfect rest in Christ—if you knew that these could be yours, would you not seek them? Well now, I want just to read you a verse which comes before my text; and as I read it I pray the Holy Ghost to apply its comfortable assurance to your soul. Look at the eleventh verse:—"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." Oh, if God's thoughts towards you be good, come to him now, and kiss his feet. The prodigal, when he was returning home, did not doubt that his father would receive him somehow or other, even if it were as one of his hired servants. He knew that he would be received somehow, and he was willing to be received anyhow.

Come, poor soul, the Lord will receive thee, whoever thou mayest be. If with thy whole heart thou dost consent at once to trust the Lord Jesus, he will receive thee. Yea, he will show thee how to trust, he will give thee faith, and give thee the blessing which thy faith looks after. Why shouldst thou not meet thy Lord in these pews this morning? Why, before you descend the steps of the Tabernacle, should you not breathe the prayer of faith, and lean your weight upon the cross of Christ, and find the mercy which our text declares you shall find if you seek it with all your heart?

Lastly, I am afraid that some people have been kept from whole-hearted seeking by *the conduct of Christian professors*. Let me urge you never to take your pattern—you that are coming to Christ—from those who profess to be his followers, for some of them are a sorry sort: yet let them be as bad as they may, what is that to you? You have your own soul to look after; and you have to seek Christ with all the more earnestness, because some who think that they have found him have been mistaken. It is a great pity when there are Christian people about, or those who say that they are Christians, to whom a poor seeking soul is unable to appeal because he would get no sympathy from them. I heard of one who, being ill, desired someone to visit him occasionally, and pray with him. A young man, a professing Christian, was mentioned as one who would willingly do so. "No," said the other, "I do not want him to pray with me, for his life does not pray." There are people of that sort about, many of them; there are some such here. One would not have much faith in their prayers, or derive much comfort

from their conversation, for, though you may hope, charitably, that there may be grace in them, it is like coal in a pit, it is a long way down and hard to get at. Their hearts are lukewarm at the best and therefore they never boil with warm and loving expressions. The genuine and healthy Christian is one who is so full of love that his heart boileth over with a good matter, and others are compelled to feel that the fire of God is burning in his soul for they see and feel the effects. O Christian brethren, I do trust that you will see to this, because, if you are half-hearted the chill which surrounds you will freeze the hearts of many who are seeking the Saviour. Father, mother, may you not fear that you are hindrances to your children? Sunday school teachers, if you go to your class like blocks of ice this afternoon, you will have cold attention when you come to talk of Christ. If the minister preaches with icicles hanging on his lips, how can he expect that men's hearts will be thawed by his icy words? No; we must set the example of seeking God with our whole heart—we that are his people; and then God by the Holy Spirit will bless our example to others, and they will come to seek him with their whole hearts too.

The Lord make us to be in downright earnest, so may we hope that toward us he will fulfil that ancient promise, "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul." Think of God's thus blessing us with his whole heart and his whole soul. Amen, Lord, so let it be.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xi. 1—28.

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THE MIGHTY ARM.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 17TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand."—
Psalm lxxxix. 13.

WHEN the soul is perfectly reconciled to God, and comes to delight in him, it rejoices in all his attributes. At the first, perhaps, it dwells almost exclusively upon his love and his mercy, but it afterwards proceeds to find joy in the sterner attributes, and especially delights itself in his holiness and in his power. It is a mark of the growth of Christian knowledge when we begin to distinguish the attributes and to rejoice in God in each one of them. It betokens meditation and thought when we are able thus to discern the things of God and to give to the Lord a psalm of praise for each one of his glories; and it also indicates a growingly intimate communion with the great Father when we begin to perceive his adorable character, and to rejoice so much in all that he is, that we can take the attributes in detail, and bless, and praise, and magnify him on account of each one of them. Under the Jewish law there were forms of the sacrifices which were of the simplest kind, such as the offering of turtle doves or young pigeons, which were simply cleft asunder and burned upon the altar; but there were other and more elaborate rules for the sacrifices which were taken from the flock and the herd; these were rightly divided, and the parts laid in their places—the head, the fat, the inwards, and the legs, and so on, as if to show that although some believers only know the atoning sacrifice as a whole and after a superficial manner, there are others still further instructed, who look deeper into divine mystery, and see the various forms which the great truth assumes. It is a saving thing to know the Lord at all with the heart; but I would, beloved, that ye knew all the varied rays of his pure light, that ye beheld the many glories of his crown, and could rejoice in each distinct excellence of his infinite perfection.

The subject of this morning is the power of God as the subject of adoration. Here, dear brethren, we have large scope for thought, for
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the power of God is manifested in connection with all his other attributes; it is the cause of all his works, and the basis and working force by which his kingdom is maintained and himself revealed. How clearly is his power beheld in *creation*: there indeed, O Lord, "thou hast a mighty arm." We injure ourselves and dishonour our Creator when we pass over his works as if they were beneath the notice of spiritual minds. It is perverse on our part to forget the exhortation, "What God has cleansed, call not thou common." The psalmist sang concerning the creating might of God in verses eleven and twelve of the psalm before us—"The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name." David did not divide between revelation and nature; he loved the word and meditated therein day and night, but at the same time he triumphed in the works of God's hands. In the hundred and fourth Psalm he found music in rocks and rills, in fowls and fir trees, and rejoiced that the glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, the Lord shall rejoice in his works. In the eighth Psalm he considered the heavens, and burst forth with the exclamation, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" With the same feeling I led you to sing this morning that child's hymn in which the power of God is revered—

"I sing the almighty power of God,
Which made the mountains rise,
Which spreads the flowing seas abroad,
And built the lofty skies."

The Lord made Job and his friends remember his power as seen in creation; indeed, it was by revealing that one attribute that Job's friends were silenced, and the patriarch himself was led to cry, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee?" We ought not to overlook that which had so salutary an influence upon others. It is a pity when people become so spiritual that they have no eye whatever for the Lord's power in rivers and mountains, in seas and storms; for God has made them all, and as in his glass he is darkly to be seen in them. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." I can understand the feeling of some who say, "I prefer spiritual preaching, and I delight most to read the spiritual parts of the word of God rather than the historical records, and to think of his grace rather than of his wisdom in nature"; but there is a fault about such a preference, excellent as it is in one way. It is as though you had a friend who was a great artist, and a master in statuary, able to make the marble almost live and speak with his magic chisel. You are accustomed to call upon this eminent sculptor, and it gives you great pleasure to talk with him, and to associate with his children, but you have never gone into his studio, for his masterpieces do not interest you. Now, this is poor fellowship, and if ever you get to be in perfect sympathy with your friend, you will be interested in that which interests him, and charmed with the various proofs of your friend's powers in design and execution. You will study his works for his sake, and love him all the more because of those wonders of beauty and joy which his hand produces. If the Lord thinks fit to display the hand of his power in the visible universe, it

would ill become any one of his children to close his eyes thereto. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." "All thy works praise thee, O God; but thy saints shall bless thee."

So, too, the power of God is to be seen in *providence*; in the overruling hand which controls common events. Our sweet singer writes in verse 9, "Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise thou stillest them." God's power is seen in the great phenomena of nature, and even in the lesser matters of every-day life. His hand guides the fall of every sere leaf, and adorns each blade of grass with its own drop of dew; but chiefly his way is in the whirlwind, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. The mighty hand of the Lord is to be seen in the events of human history; his power is manifest in courts and armies, in the rise and fall of empires, in the growth of nations, or in their overthrow. Behold how he broke Egypt in pieces as one that was slain, and scattered his enemies with his strong arm. His people did not refuse to sing of his great power when he smote great kings and slew famous kings, because his mercy to his people endureth for ever. It ought to be a subject of great joy to all righteous souls that the world is not left to itself, or to tyrants: the might is with the right after all, for power belongeth unto God. There is a Governor and Ruler who is Lord of all, and all power is in his hand. Have you not often wished more power to the arm of the man who attacks insolence and cruelty? Be glad, then, that all power is in the hand of the Judge of all the earth, who must and will do right. He will not leave bloodshed unavenged, nor suffer wanton cruelty and horrible brutality to go unpunished; and if the great ones of the earth pass by with indifference, or wink the eye in wicked policy, there is an eye that sees, and a hand that will mete out vengeance stern and sure. In patience possess your souls, O ye people of God, for "God reigneth over the heathen, he sitteth upon the throne of his holiness." The needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the oppressed for ever trodden down, for verily the Lord reigneth, and his power shall defend the cause of right.

It is another subject for which we have reason also to adore God, that his power is seen in *the ultimate judgment of the wicked*, a terrible subject upon which I will not enlarge, but one which should prostrate us in the dust before his awful majesty. There are two flaming jewels of Jehovah's crown which will be terribly seen in hell; his wrath and his power. "What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?" Righteous indignation and omnipotence will be glorified together in that last tremendous act of judgment in which he will separate the righteous from the wicked, and apportion to the unbelievers their due. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" What must be the strength of an angry God! Who shall stand against him when once he stirreth up his indignation, when he shall break the nations with a rod of iron, and shiver them like potters' vessels? Beware, saith he, "ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Who shall stand against this great and terrible God in the day of his wrath? Who shall endure in that day when mercy's day is over, and justice alone sits on her burning throne.

Neither of these, however, is the subject of this morning, though we

should not have completed the topic without alluding to them. The subject is the power displayed in connection with the mercy of God, for so Ethan begins this noble covenant psalm: "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations." Power in alliance with grace is our one theme.

First, we shall consider the mighty power of God in his grace, as *revealed in our experience*; secondly, divine power, as *displayed in Christ Jesus*; and, thirdly, we shall endeavour to reflect upon the same power, and consider how it should be *practically recognized*. We must be short on each point, for our time is scanty.

I. First, the mighty arm of God displayed in the way of grace, as **MANIFESTED IN OUR EXPERIENCE.**

First, beloved, remember the *divine longsuffering*. What a mighty arm of grace it must have been which held back the anger of God while we were in a state of rebellion and impenitence. For God to rule the angry sea seems nothing to me compared with the power which he exercises upon himself when he endures the provocations of ungodly men, the hardness of their hearts, their rejection of Christ, and oftentimes their blasphemous speeches and their unclean deeds. O sinner, when thou art sinning with a high hand and with an outstretched arm, is it not a wonder of wonders that God does not cut thee down, and end thy insolence? He saith, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries": is it not a marvel that he has not eased himself of you, and taken you away with a stroke? You know how it is with some men, a word and a blow; but it has not been so with God. There have been many words of love and many deeds of kindness. He has waited long, and is waiting now, stretching out his hands all the day to a disobedient and gainsaying people. What power is this which restrains its own power, the power of God over his own omnipotence, so that he does not let his anger flame forth at once and devour the ungodly, nor suffer the sword of execution to smite down the rebel in the midst of his provocations? Glory be unto thy lovingkindness and thy longsuffering, O God, for in them we see thy mighty self-restraining power.

But, next, we saw the power of God so as to recognize it when *the Lord subdued us* by his mighty grace. What omnipotence is displayed in the conquest of every rebellious sinner! By nature the sinner stands out very stoutly against God, and will not obey his voice. Often he is bulwarked round with *prejudices*; and you and I, who seek to convert him, are quite unable to reach him. Prejudice is an earthwork into which you may fire with the heaviest cannon, but without avail, for the balls are buried in the earth, and no result follows. When men will not see, no light can help them, for they wilfully close their eyes. When they will not hear, the charms of the gospel avail not, for they have resolutely closed their ears. It is a wonder of wonders when at last God conquers prejudice, and the man finds himself where he would have sworn he never could be, melted down and penitent at Jesus' feet. If a prophet had told him it would ever be so, he would have said, "Thou art mad, this cannot be: I abhor the very name of it." Thou hast a mighty arm, O God, when prejudiced Saul of Tarsus falls down at thy feet, and rises to become thine apostle.

Men are surrounded often with a granite wall of *obstinacy*: they will not yield to the power of divine love. Preach as you may, they are not to be moved, but remain like an impregnable fortress, frowning from its own inaccessible rock, defying all assaults. You can find no way to get at them. You would be willing almost to die if you could capture their hearts for Christ, but they are neither to be taken by threatening nor by wooing. They are like leviathan whose scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. "Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons, or his head with fish spears?" They appear to have no joints to their harness through which the arrow of conviction may penetrate: but thou hast a mighty arm, O God, and thine enemies are made to feel thine arrows; those who were exceeding stout against thee have, nevertheless, come crouching at thy feet and have become thy servants. Glory be to God, the northern iron and the steel become wax at his bidding.

We have seen some, also, who have been rooted in their *habits of sin*, altogether severed from their old sins. Wonder of wonders, the Ethiopian has changed his skin, and the leopard has lost his spots: for he who was accustomed to do evil has learned to do well. Behold a miracle of mighty grace. The sinner has grown old in sin: like an old oak he has become rooted to the earth by a thousand roots. To transplant him seemed impossible, it were far easier to cut him down. Yet the giant hand of grace has taken hold of that ancient tree and shaken it to and fro by conviction of sin, and at last it has by conversion been drawn from its place right up by the roots, so that the place which once knew it knew it no more. The rock and soil in which it had been imbedded for, perhaps, half a century were made to give way before the upheaving, uprooting force, and the man, divided from his former life, has been a proof of what the Lord can do. The Lord knows how to cleave the mountain and divide the sea, and therefore he can separate men from their darling lusts, and teach them to cut off right arms and pluck out right eyes rather than perish in sin. Truly, Lord, thou hast a mighty arm.

Satan teaches men to defend themselves against grace by bulwarks of *pride*. They say, "Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice?" They lift up their horn on high, and speak with a stiff neck. They are self-righteous, they are sure that they have done no ill; the gospel is powerless upon them because they are so lofty in their looks and insolent in their thoughts. But thou hast a mighty arm, O Lord, thou layest proud sinners very low; thou makest them hungry and thirsty, and then they cry unto thee in their trouble. Thou hast a mighty arm amongst the proud, and thou bringest down their heart with labour, they fall down and there is none to help. "He hath put down the mighty from their seats." Nebuchadnezzar, from saying, "Behold this great Babylon that I have builded," learned to confess that those who walk in pride the Lord is able to abase.

Equally mighty is the Lord to overcome *despair*, for this is another one of the fortresses in which sinners intrench themselves against divine grace. "There is no hope," say they, "therefore will we give up ourselves to our iniquities," and it is almost idle to attempt to convert those who are wilfully despairing. They resent the consolations of the Bible, and reject the promises of God; and yet the Lord can break the bars of iron and cut the gates of brass in pieces, and bring up the

captives from the dungeons of despair, and set them on a rock, and put a new song into their mouths, and make them praise his name for evermore. From the iron cage the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, can set the captives free. All glory be unto his name, when God resolves to save the sinner he will have his will without violating the will of man. In a sweet, soft, gentle manner, in which the power lies in the gentleness, and the force lies in the tenderness, the Lord can conquer the most obstinate. He makes the lion to lie down with the lamb, so that a little child shall lead it. Thus the power of God is seen in the conquest of sinners.

That power is equally seen in *their transformation*; for is it not a marvel that God should be able to make old and corrupt rebels into new creatures in Christ Jesus? Every conversion is a display of omnipotence. To create the world was but half a wonder compared with the creation of a right spirit; for there was nothing to hinder when God spake and the world began; but when God speaks to ungodly men there is a resisting force, which impedes the work and even defies the great worker. There is a darkness and a death, there is a force of evil and an inability towards good which must be overcome, yet the Lord maketh all things new, and causeth the new creation to arise in the hearts of his people. Verily he hath a mighty arm. Glory be to the Lord who only doeth great wonders with a high hand and an outstretched arm.

Conversion is also called a resurrection. It will be a great feat of power when dead carcasses shall live at the sound of the last trumpet, but it is an equal wonder when the dry bones of dead sinners come to life, when those who were scattered at the grave's mouth, the hopeless, graceless, Christless, nevertheless are made to live at the sounding of God's word by the power of his Spirit. Oh, you that have been new created and quickened into newness of life, adore his power to-day! Who but a God could have made you what you are? Consider what you were, and reflect upon the glorious position to which the Lord has brought you by the blood of the cross. Think what rebels you were, and how set on mischief your nature was; and now, subdued by sovereign grace, your spirit longs for his embrace, you follow after holiness and seek to have it perfected in the fear of God. What a revolution is this! What a turning of things upside down! To turn the wilderness into springs of water and the desert into a flowing stream is nothing compared with turning the dead, cold, dry heart of man into a mighty wellspring of love springing up unto eternal life. Glory be to thy power, oh thou infinitely mighty Jehovah, thou hast a mighty arm.

That same power is seen, dear friends, in *the various deliverances* which the Lord gives to his people at the outset, when their enemies come against them so fiercely. Behold, my brethren, how strong was the hand of God which delivered us from the bondage of our first doubts and fears, when conscience accused and the law condemned, when we thought ourselves only waiting for the death warrant and the execution. Behold the Lord has routed our despair, he has set us free from fear and brought us into the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. We were slaves to sin, too, and oh how sin marshalled all its armies against us at the first, if haply it might cut off our earliest hopes. But mighty was that Christ of God who put all our sins to the sword and drowned them in the Red Sea of his blood. "There brake

he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." Then Satan came forth with the most horrible temptations, and roared upon us like a lion, for he will not willingly lose his subjects. He sought to cast about us all his nets, that he might hold us captive, and prevent our flying to the divine refuge. But, behold, the prey has been taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive has been delivered, and we are this day rescued from the power of sin and Satan. Even the law itself hath now no power over us to condemn us, for Christ has satisfied it, and we are free. Mighty is thine arm, O God! Thine own right hand, and thy holy arm have gotten thee the victory.

And since then, beloved, in *the continual upholding of the saints*, in their final perseverance which is guaranteed, how much of the power of God is seen. You have passed through many troubles, some of you, troubles most heavy and sore, but they have not prevailed against you nor overthrown you. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Fierce were the foes that gathered against us many a time, and had not the Lord been on our side they had swallowed us up quick; but thou, O Lord, hast a mighty arm, and in thy name have we found a refuge. They compassed us about like bees, yea, they compassed us about, but in the name of the Lord have we destroyed them. Out of what sins and temptations have we come forth victorious! With some of you your path has been through the wilderness, and through one continuous scene of warfare. Snares and traps have been thickly strewn all along your pathway; trials and discouragements have fallen like a storm of hail perpetually beating; and yet you are not overthrown. He keepeth the feet of his saints. The life of any one Christian is a world of wonders, but in some believers their experience consists of a series of great miracles. "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." How has our soul escaped as a bird from the fowler's snare! The mighty adversaries have been overcome by him who is mightier than they all! The divine strength has been manifested in our weakness. My brother, is it not a wonder that being such a poor worm as you are, yet you have never been crushed? Is it not a marvel that though your faith has been as a bruised reed it has not been broken, and though your piety has been like smoking flax it has never been quenched? Kept alive with death so near, preserved when enemies have been so fierce, will you not say indeed "Thou hast a mighty arm, strong is thy right hand"?

Brethren, the end cometh, but it will all be right at last, for unless the Lord shall come, we have yet to meet *the last grim adversary*, but we are not afraid, because our brethren who have gone before us have set us an example of how to die triumphantly. How gloriously have they triumphed in their last hours. We have stood by their side, seen the brightness of their eye when all around was deathshade, and heard their exulting songs when all that looked upon them wept at the thought of their departure. Blanched their cheek? Far from it. They have been as jubilant in their dying hour as the warrior when he divides the spoil. As the bride rejoiceth in her bridal, they have looked forward to the coming of their great Lord and to their being blessed for ever in his embrace. We have been ready to cry out with them, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!" Truly, Lord, when thy

poor, weak, suffering people die triumphantly, we see that thou hast a mighty arm. When flesh and heart are failing, when friends cannot help, when every earthly comfort vanishes, for the heart still to rejoice and triumph—this is to see the arm of the Lord made bare, and this causes us to bless and magnify his holy name.

I would to God that I had more ability to set forth this majestic subject; but I have done my best, and I ask your meditations in the quiet of this afternoon to assist me, that you may really adore and bless the power which is so conspicuous in every vessel of mercy, so revealed in your own self if you be indeed a child of God. O Holy Spirit, make known to us the exceeding greatness of his mighty power, to usward who believe.

II. Secondly, let us behold the mighty arm of God as specially DISPLAYED IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST JESUS; and here will you kindly follow me in the psalm itself, for there you will see that the power of God is displayed in Jesus Christ, in the choice of him, and the exaltation of him, to be a Prince and a Saviour. See verse 19: "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people." Christ is the incarnation of the power of divine grace, in him dwells the power of God to save the sons of men; and yet in what weakness it dwelt. He was a man despised and rejected, lowly and meek, poor, and without worldly honour. His was the weakness of shame and suffering, poverty and dishonour; but the power of God was upon him, and is upon him now. It is a grand thing to know that God by the weakness of man, taking it into connection with his own nature, has routed sin, Satan, death and hell. The battle in the wilderness was between Satan and a man, tempted as we are; but oh, how gloriously that matchless man overthrew the tempter and prevailed. The agony in the garden of Gethsemane was that of a man: it was a man, though God, who sweat great drops of blood, and uttered strong crying and tears, and won the victory by which evil is dethroned; and he that met the powers of evil on the cross, and stood alone and trod the wine-press till there remained not an uncrushed cluster, was a man. It is by his power, even the power of the man of Nazareth, that all the powers of evil have been for ever blasted and withered; so that, though they rebel, it is but a struggling gasp for life. As surely as God sits on his throne, the foot of the seed of the woman shall be upon the serpent's head, to crush it for ever; for mighty as were the hosts of evil, God hath exalted one chosen out of the people, and laid help upon him, that he may eternally vanquish all the hosts of darkness. Strong is thy right hand, O Saviour, for by weakness and suffering and death thou hast overthrown all thy people's foes.

His power was seen, next, in *our Lord's anointing*. "I have found David my servant, with my holy oil have I anointed him." You know how in his preaching there went out of his mouth a sharp two-edged sword with which he smote sin, because the Spirit of God was upon him. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit bore witness in the entire body of Christ, making all his servants speak with tongues of fire the word of the gospel. The Spirit of God is with Christ on earth still in his church, so that, feeble though the speech of his ministers may be, a secret power attends it, irresistibly subduing the forces of evil. Rejoice

ye this day, beloved; for the anointing rests still in the church of God, and the anointed Redeemer must be victorious in every place. Thanks be unto God which causeth his word to triumph in every place by the power of the eternal Spirit. We ought therefore to adore Jesus Christ as having the power of God, because the Holy Ghost is always with him and with his word, and he is therefore mighty to save.

We must equally magnify the power of God because of *the continuance of the empire of Christ in the world*. As saith the Psalmist: "with whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him, and I will beat down his foes before his face and plague them that hate him." These eighteen hundred years every effort has been put forth to root up the church of Christ. The devil and all his servants on earth have conspired to overthrow the growing kingdom of our Lord; but they have never succeeded. Think, my brethren, what the power of God must be which has kept the church alive under fiery persecutions, rescued it from the fangs of the Inquisition, preserved it from the poison of heresy, and the pestilence of infidelity, and, what is worse, enabled it to survive the horrible dragon of Popery which has threatened altogether to carry away the church with the floods which it pours out of its mouth. Yet the chosen seed live on and are multiplied in the land, even as it is promised in the thirty-sixth verse of the Psalm before us: "His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me." The establishment and continuation of the church is an extraordinary proof of divine power.

So are all *the conquests* of Christ; some of which we have seen, and more of which are to come. "I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him," is the divine promise. "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. I will set his hand also in the sea and his right hand in the rivers." Glory be to God, Christ is triumphant still. Still in the preaching of his truth he rides forth conquering and to conquer. The gospel has not lost its old force, but whenever it is preached in faith it wins the day. See what power it has in drawing together the multitudes and holding them in breathless attention: a man has nothing to do but to preach Christ simply, and with all his might, and the people will hear it. We want no endowment of the state, we seek no acts of parliament to help us. Give us a clear stage and no favour, an open Bible and an earnest tongue, and the people shall yet be aroused and the multitude shall bow before the people's King. Jesus Christ is still the mightiest name which can be pronounced by mortal tongue; its all-subduing power shall yet be felt in the remotest regions of the earth.

Beloved, I have not time to do more than say that the great power of God's grace is embodied in *Christ's mighty intercession*. See verse 26: "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation." This makes him mighty to save—"He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." I should like to have an hour to expatiate upon the gracious power of God as seen in the intercession of Christ. Omnipotence dwells in every plea that falls from those dear lips, as the eternal Son pleads his own merits with the

everlasting Father. Beloved, the power of Christ is well known to many of you. Did it not call you from the dead? Has not it kept you from going down into the pit? Is there not such power in his name that it makes your heart to leap? If we speak of anything else, you listen to it and glide into sleep; but if you hear about *him*, does it not stir the very deeps of your soul? Have you not often, when you felt faint and weary, sprung to your feet with exultation at the very thought of *him*? Has not his presence made your sick bed soft, and what you thought your dying couch to be a throne whereon you sat and reigned as in the heavenly places?

"Jesus, the very thought of thee
With transport fills my breast."

You know it is so. The power of Jesus' name, who can measure it? and what will be your sense of his power when you reach another world; when he shall have brought you into his rest, even you who were so unworthy; when he shall reveal in you all the majesty of his goodness; when heaven shall be yours, and all its boundless plains and golden streets,—and when, looking around, you shall find all your Christian brethren there without exception, as many as loved the Lord below, all safely gathered into the fold at last? What a shout shall sound throughout heaven when the armies of the living God shall assemble and find not a soldier missing; when they shall read the muster-roll, and Little Faith shall be found there, and Ready-to-Halt shall be there without his crutches, and Miss Much-afraid shall be there, and Mistress Despondency shall be there, each able to answer to his or her own name and say, "Here am I." Satan has not devoured a single lamb of all the flock, nor slain a single man of all the host. All along the line Jesus has been victorious! When you shall see the whole host assembled, and remember the struggles through which each one of them came, the much tribulation through which they waded to their crowns, you will exclaim with rapture, "Thou hast a mighty arm, strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand." All glory be to Jehovah Jesus, our almighty Saviour!

III. Now this brings me to my conclusion, and here we have to answer the question—HOW IS THIS POWER TO BE PRACTICALLY RECOGNIZED? If you will practically carry out what I say, a few words will suffice.

First, if the power of God be so great, *yield to it*. Man, do you hope to resist God? Hast thou an arm like God's, and canst thou thunder with a voice like his? Throw down those weapons, and cease to wage a hopeless war. Capitulate at once, surrender at discretion. Oh, if there be a man here who is the enemy of God, I beseech him to count the cost before he continue the war, and see whether he is able to brave it out with God. Shall wax fight with the fire, or tow contend with the

flame? He would go through a host of such as thou art, O man, as fire burneth up the stubble, and or ever thou hast time to think of it, thou shalt be utterly destroyed. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little."

The next practical use is this—is God so strong? *then trust him to save you.* Never say again that he cannot snatch you from perdition: never doubt his power to save, even in extremity. I have shown you that he has treasured up his gracious power in the person of his Son Jesus Christ, therefore look unto Jesus Christ and be ye saved. All power lies with him, he can forgive all sin, and he can also subdue all iniquity, change the most depraved heart, and implant every grace in the soul. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

Next, if he be so strong, then *trust him in everything.* Oh, you that are his people, never dare to distrust him. Is his arm shortened? Cannot the Lord deliver you? Bring your burdens, your troubles, your wants, your griefs, pour them out like water before him, let them flow forth at the foot of the Almighty, and they shall pass away and you shall sing, "The Lord is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

Is God so strong, then *shake off all fear of man.* Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die? Man is but grass, withered in an hour, wherefore should you tremble at his frown? He is crushed before the moth; why then fear him? Let not the faces of proud men confound you. Trust in God and fear not, for the mighty God of Jacob is with us, and greater is he that is for us than all they that can be against us.

And now as to *thy service*, to which thou art called by the Lord. If he be so strong, do not think of thine own weakness any longer, except as being a platform for his strength. Hast thou only one talent? God's Holy Spirit is not limited in power. He can make thy one talent as fruitful as another man's ten. Art thou weak as water? Then rejoice this day, and glory in infirmity, because the power of God shall rest upon thee. Think not of what *thou* canst do—that is a very small affair, but consider what *he* can do by thee. He can strengthen the feeble against the strong. Behold, this day he saith unto thee, "Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them."

Last of all, with regard to all *the future* which lies before you,—is God so strong? then commit it to his hands. You have a great trouble to face to-morrow, you are expecting a greater trouble still at the end of the week. Now, be not afraid, for the Lord liveth to deliver

thee. What! Dost thou fear? Is thy Counsellor perished? Has thy Helper failed thee? How canst thou sink in the deep waters when underneath thee are the everlasting arms? The mighty God is thy refuge, how canst thou be in danger? Wherefore dost thou look into the future at all? Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. God is the God of to-morrow as well as the God of to-day. Cease from thy troubling, for it weakens thee, but cannot help thee; it dishonours thy God, thy Saviour, and thus it is evil. In patience and quietness wait for the fulfilment of his promise: rest in him and be at peace. Stand thou still, and see the salvation of God. O Lord, glorify thyself this morning in both saint and sinner, by manifesting the greatness of thy power, for thou hast a mighty arm, strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxxix.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—205, 89 (Part II.),
679, 680.

MR. SPURGEON begs to remind his friends that at this time he is carrying on the Pastors' College with 110 students, the Stockwell Orphanage with 240 orphans, and the Colportage Society with 52 colporteurs. For these and many other works his dependence is upon the mighty hand of God, but as God works by means it is well to let all friends know that for all these works about £300 is needed every week. We are fighting this battle, will not our readers send us ammunition?

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ÆNEAS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 16TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

Upon the occasion of the regular hearers vacating their seats to allow strangers to fill the house.

“And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Æneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.”—Acts ix. 32—35.

I MAY not hope that I shall see you all again, and so, as I have the opportunity of only preaching one sermon to you, I must make it as full as I can of *essence of gospel*, from beginning to end. We have heard of a chaplain who preached in a jail, who selected a subject which he divided into two heads. The first part was the sinner's disease; this he took for his topic on one Sabbath, and closed the sermon by saying that he should preach upon the sinner's remedy upon the following Sunday. Now, there were several of the prisoners hanged on the Monday, according to the custom of the bad old times, so that they did not hear that part of the discourse which it was most necessary for them to hear. It would have been well to have told out the great news of salvation at once to men so near their end, and I think that in every sermon, if the preacher confines himself to one subject, and leaves out essential gospel truth, under the notion that he will preach salvation by Jesus another day, he is very unwise, for some of his congregation may be dead and gone—alas, some of them lost—before he will have the opportunity of coming to the grand and all-important point, namely, the way of salvation. We will not fall into that evil to-night. We will try to shoot at the very centre of our target, and preach the plan of salvation as completely as we can; and may God grant that his blessing may rest on it, the Holy Spirit working with it.

No. 1,315.

I shall only preach this one sermon to some of you : you will, therefore, have the greater patience with me, as I shall not inflict myself upon you again : but, if we are to have only one communication with each other, let us come to real practical business and waste no time to-night. A good deal of sermon-hearing is mere trifling ; let us come to matter-of-fact preaching and hearing at this time. I am afraid that some sermon-preaching is playing too—fine words and oratorical fireworks, but no agony for souls. We mean business to-night. My heart will not be satisfied unless many of you who came in here without Christ shall go down those steps saved by his atoning blood. Bitter will be my disappointment if many do not lay hold of Jesus, and realize in their own souls Peter's words, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." I have faith in the great Physician that many of you will go away whole to-night, though sin-sick when you came into this house of prayer. Much supplication has gone up to heaven for this, and the Lord heareth prayer ; and therefore do I reckon that miracles of healing will surely be wrought in this house on this occasion.

To the point, then. Peter came to Lydda, and found one who bore the classic name of Æneas : no mighty warrior, however, but a poor paralyzed man, who had been confined to his bed for eight long years. Touched with a sight of the man's feebleness, Peter felt the impulse of the Spirit upon him ; and, looking at him as he lay there, he said, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole : arise, and make thy bed." Touched by the same Spirit who inspired the apostle, the man believed the message,—believed that Christ had healed him, at once rose and made his bed, and in an instant was perfectly restored. Now let us hear something about this man. We are not to hear Virgil sing, "arms and the man," but we are to let Luke tell us of the man and his Saviour.

I. In the first place, then, it is very clear that **THE MAN WAS TRULY SICK**. Had he not been *really sick*, the incident before us would have been all a piece of imposture—a feint and a pretence from beginning to end : but he was hopelessly infirm. He had been anxiously watched by his friends for eight years, and was so completely palsied that during all those years he had not left his bed, which had grown hard as a stone beneath him. Now, as there is no room for a great cure unless there is a great sickness, so there is no room for God's great grace unless there is great sin. Jesus Christ did not come into the world to save sham sinners, but real sinners ; neither did he descend from heaven to seek those who are not diseased with sin, for the whole have no need of a physician, but he has come to seek those who are deeply diseased, and to give them real healing. This man's sickness was no imaginary ill, for he could not move ; his hands and feet were quite paralyzed. If in any limb there was a measure of motion, it was only a tremulous quiver, which rather indicated growing weakness than remaining force. He was bereaved of all strength. Are you such by nature, my friend, in a spiritual sense ? Certainly you are so ; but have you found it out ? Has the Spirit of God made you feel that you can do nothing aright apart from him, and that you are altogether ruined and palsied unless Jesus Christ can save you ? If so, do not despair because you feel how terribly your soul is smitten ; but, on the contrary, say to yourself, "Here is room for mercy in me. If ever a soul wanted

healing, I do. Here is space for divine power to operate in me, for if ever a soul was weak and palsied, I am just that soul." Be thou cheered with the hope that God will make of thine infirmity a platform upon which he will display his power.

The man had been paralyzed *eight years*. The length of its endurance is a terrible element in a disease. Perhaps yours is no eight years' malady, but twenty-eight, or thirty-eight, or forty-eight, or seventy-eight, perhaps, eighty-eight years have you been in bondage under it. Well, blessed be God, the number of years in which we have lived in sin cannot prevent the mercy of God in Christ Jesus from making us whole. You have a very long bill to discharge, while another friend has but a short one, and owes comparatively little; but it is just as easy for the creditor to write "*paid*" at the bottom of the large bill as the smaller one. And now that our Lord Jesus Christ has made full atonement it is as easy for God to pardon the iniquities of eighty years as the sins of the child of eight. Be not despairing, then. Jesus Christ can make such as thou art whole, even though thy heart and thine understanding have been long paralyzed with sin.

The man's disease was one which was then reckoned to be, and probably is now, *entirely incurable*. Who can restore a palsied man? Æneas could not restore himself, and no merely human physician had skill to do anything for him. Dear hearer, has the Spirit of God made you feel that your soul's wound is incurable? Is your heart sick? Is your understanding darkened? Do you feel your whole nature to have become paralyzed with sin, and is there no physician? Ah, I know there is none among men, for there is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there; there never was, or else the daughter of my people would have been healed of her hurt long ago. There is no soul physician except at Calvary; no balm but in the Saviour's wounds. If you feel that you are incurably soul-sick, and the case is desperate unless infinite mercy shall interpose, then I am glad that you are here to-night. I am glad that there is such a one as Æneas present. Do you know that the most delightful task in the world is to preach to those who consciously need the Saviour? Mr. Whitfield used to say that he could wish to preach all day and all night long to those who really knew that they wanted Christ. We are bound to preach to everybody, for our Master said, "preach the gospel to every creature" under heaven; but, oh, when we can get at a knot of hungry souls it is easy and pleasant work to feed them with the bread of heaven; and when hearts are thirsty it is sweet work to hand out the living water, for they are all eager to take it. You know, the great difficulty is that you can bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink if he is not thirsty; and so you may set Jesus Christ before men, but if they do not feel their need of him they will not have him. You may preach in tones of thunder, or plead with accents of intense affection, but you cannot stir them to desire the grace which is in Christ Jesus, unless they feel their need of it. Oh, I am happy to-night—thrice happy—if anywhere in this house there is an Æneas who is sick, and knows that he is sick; who knows his disease to be incurable, laments that he is palsied and can do nothing, and longs to be healed by divine power. He is the man who will welcome the glad news of the gospel of free grace. The

man was really sick, and so are you, my hearer; your sins are great, your sinfulness of nature is grievous, and your case is beyond reach of human skill.

II. In the second place, **THIS MAN, ÆNEAS, KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT JESUS**; because, otherwise, when Peter said, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole," Æneas might have earnestly enquired what he meant, but could not intelligently have acted upon what he could not comprehend. He could not have believed what Peter said, because he would not have understood his meaning. Mere words, unless they appeal to the understanding, cannot be useful; they must convey light as well as sound, or they cannot breed faith. When Peter said, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole," I have no doubt that Æneas remembered what he had aforetime heard about Jesus Christ, and his wondrous life and death. Now, lest there should be one in this congregation who does not know Jesus Christ, and does not understand how it is that he is able to heal sin-sick souls, let us briefly tell the old, old story over again.

"Jesus Christ," translated into English, means a "Saviour anointed." Who is he? He is the Son of the Highest, very God of very God; and when we were lost in sin he who is called the Son of God laid aside his most divine array, and came hither to be dressed like ourselves in this poor flesh and blood; in the manger he lay as an infant, and on a woman's breast he hung a feeble babe. The God who stretched forth the heavens like a tent to dwell in, and digged the deep foundations of the earth, came down to earth to take upon himself our nature and to be born of a woman. Oh, matchless stoop of unbounded condescension that the Infinite should be an infant, and the Eternal God should conceal himself within the form of a babe. This marvel was performed that we might be saved. Being here, the Lord of angels lived some thirty years or so amongst men; he spent the earliest part of his life as a carpenter's son obedient to his father, and he was throughout the whole of his earthly sojourn obedient to his father, God. Inasmuch as we had no righteousness, for we had broken the law, he was here to make a righteousness for us, and he did so. But there was also wanted an atonement, for we had sinned, and God's judgment demanded that there should be punishment for sin: Jesus stepped in as the Surety and the Substitute for the guilty sons of men. He bared his back to the lash of justice, and opened his breast to her lance, and died that sinners might live. The just for the unjust, he died that he might bring us to God:—

"He bore, that we might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire."

Now, when he had thus lived and died, they placed his body in the tomb, but he rose again on the third day, and he is yet alive; and by this man Christ Jesus, who is risen from the dead, is preached unto the nations the remission of sins. For after forty days this same Jesus, who had been dead and buried, rose into the heavens in the presence of his disciples, ascending till a cloud concealed him from their sight, and he now sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, pleading there the merit of his blood, making intercession for sinners that they may be reconciled to God. Now, brethren, this is the story that we have to tell

you, with the addition that this same Jesus is coming again to judge the quick and the dead, for he is Lord of all. He is at this hour the Mediator appointed by the infinitely glorious Jehovah, having power over all flesh that he may give eternal life to as many as Jehovah hath given him, and this we beseech you to consider, lest when he comes as a judge you should be condemned at his bar. Æneas had heard more or less of these great facts. The story of the incarnate God had come to his ears by some means or other, and Æneas understood that though Jesus Christ was not in the room, and there was only Peter and a few friends there, and though Jesus Christ was not on earth, but was gone to heaven, yet his power on earth was the same as ever it was. He knew that Jesus could work miracles from heaven as well as when he was here below. He understood that he who healed the palsy when he was here, could heal the palsy now that he has risen to his throne; and so Æneas believed in Jesus Christ from what he had heard, simply trusting in him for healing. By means of that faith Æneas was made whole.

I will very earnestly dwell on that point for a second or two. I am persuaded that in this congregation all of you know the story of Jesus Christ crucified. You have heard it on the Sabbath from the pulpit. Your children sing it when they come home from the Sunday School. You have a Bible in every house, and you read the "old, old story" in the plain but sublime language of our own noble version; but, oh, if you have heard it and know it, how is it that you have not drawn from it the same inference that this poor paralyzed man did? How is it that ye have no faith? Jesus lives, he sits on Zion's hill, he receives poor sinners still. Jesus lives "exalted on high to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins." He can heal you now, and save you now as well as if you met him in the street, or saw him standing at your door knocking for admittance. I would to God that this inference were drawn by you all.

III. We have got so far: the man was sick, and the man knew something about Christ. And now came the most important point of all: THE MAN BELIEVED ON THE LORD JESUS.

Peter said to him, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." The man did not believe in Peter as the healer, for you notice Peter does not say anything about himself. Peter does not say, "As the head of the church, I, by power delegated to me, make thee whole." There is no allusion to any such claim, Peter preached too clear a gospel for that. That is the purest gospel which has the least of man in it, and the most of Christ. I charge you, men and brethren, do not listen to that teaching which sets the priest in front of the Saviour, or even by the side of the Saviour, for it is false and ruinous. Your forefathers, Englishmen, your forefathers bled and died that they might never submit to that vile superstition which is being now propagated by a considerable party in the Established Church of this once Protestant land! No man beneath the sky has any more power to save your soul than you have yourself, and if any presumptuous priestling tells you that he has, do not believe him, but despise his claims. An old woman asks me to cross her hand with a sixpence, and says that she will tell my fortune. I am not such a fool. And if another person dressed in habiliments, which are not quite so becoming to him as a red cloak is

to an old woman, tells me that he can regenerate my child, or forgive my sins, I treat him with the same contempt and pity as that with which I treat the wicked hag. I believe in neither the one imposter nor the other. If ever you are saved you must be saved by Jesus Christ alone through your own personal belief in him; certainly not by the intervention of any man, or set of men, hail they from whatever church they will. God send that the Pope and the priesthood and all their detestable deceits may go down in this land, and that Christ may be exalted!

As this man had no faith in any supposed power coming from Peter, much less had he any faith in himself, neither did he look within himself for hope. He did not say to Peter, "But I do not feel strength enough to get well;" neither did he say, "I think I do feel power enough to shake off this palsy." He said neither the one nor the other. Peter's message took him off from himself. It was, "*Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole*; it is not that thou hast stamina in thy constitution and rallying points about thy bodily system. No, *Æneas*, thou art paralyzed; thou canst do nothing; but Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." That was what the man had to believe; and it is very much what you also, my dear hearer, must believe.

With his faith *Æneas* had the desires which showed that it was not mere speculation, but solid practical believing; he anxiously wished to be made whole. Oh, that sinners anxiously wished to be saved! Oh, that yonder angry man wished to be cured of his bad temper! Oh, that yonder covetous man wished to be cured of his avarice! Oh, that yonder lustful man wished to be cured of his uncleanness! Oh, that yonder drunkard wished to be cured of his excess! Oh, that men really wanted to get rid of their sins! But no. I never heard of men reckoning a cancer to be a jewel, but there are many men who look upon their sins as if they were gems, which they keep as hid treasure, so that they will sooner lose heaven than part with their lustful pleasures. *Æneas* wanted to be made whole, and was ready to believe when Peter spoke to him about Jesus Christ.

And what did *Æneas* believe? He believed—and may you believe the same!—first, that Jesus could heal *him*, could heal *him*, *Æneas*. John Brown, do you believe that Jesus Christ can cure you? I do not care, John, what your faith is about your wife's case; it is about yourself that you want faith: Jesus Christ is able to save *you*—you, *Æneas*; you, John Brown; you, Thomas; you, Sarah; you, Mary. He is able to save *you*. Can you grip that, and reply, "Yes, he is able to save *me*"?

And *Æneas* believed that Jesus Christ was able to save him *there and then*, just as he was. He had not taken a course of physic; he had not been under galvanism to strengthen his nerves and sinews and prepare him to be cured, but he believed that Jesus Christ could save him without any preparation, just as he was, then, immediately, with a present salvation. When you think what Christ is, and what he has done, it ought not to be difficult to believe this. But truly God's power must be revealed before your soul will believe this unto salvation. Yet is it true that Jesus Christ can heal, and can heal at once. Whatever the sin is, he can cure it. I mentioned a whole set of sins just now. The scarlet fever of pride, the loathsome leprosy of lust, the

shivering ague of unbelief, the paralysis of avarice,—he can heal all, and with a word, instantaneously, for ever, completely, just now. Yes, sinner, he can heal *you now*. Æneas believed that. He believed, and, as he believed, Jesus did make him whole. Oh, I wish I could to-night so preach the gospel that my Lord and Master would lead many unbelievers to believe in him. O Holy Spirit, work thou with the word! Sinner, dost thou want forgiveness? Christ has wrought it out. Every sin that you have done shall be forgiven you for his name's sake if you trust Jesus to do it. Do you see your sins like a great army pursuing you? Do you think they will swallow you up quick? Jesus Christ, if you believe in him, will make an end of them all. You have read in Exodus how Pharaoh and his hosts pursued the tribes of Israel, and the people were terribly alarmed; but early in the morning they were no more afraid, for Miriam took her timbrel, and the daughters of Israel went forth with her in the dance; and they sang, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." One of the most magnificent notes in that marvellous song was this, "The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left." The damsels took up the refrain, and sang, "Not one, not one, not one! The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left." Now, if you believe in Jesus, the whole army of your sins shall sink beneath the sea of his blood, and your soul shall sing, "The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left." Such shall be your song to-night, if you are enabled to believe in Jesus Christ, God's crucified Son.

But do not think that we preach about the pardon of past sin only, because if a man could get his past sins pardoned, and go on as he did before, it would be so much the worse for him. Pardon of sin, without deliverance from its power, would be rather a curse than a blessing; but wherever sin is pardoned, God breaks the neck of its power in the soul. Mind, we do not tell you that Jesus Christ will forgive the past and then leave you to live the same life as before; but we tell you this: whatever the sin is that is now a disease to you, Jesus Christ can heal you of it. He can save you from the habit and power of evil doing and thinking. I will not attempt to go into details. There are odd people coming into the tabernacle on ordinary occasions, and so I dare say there may be to-night. How often has there come in a man to whom I might say, "Put out your tongue, sir. Ah, I see red spots, and black spots, for you are a liar and a swearer." Can my Master heal such a diseased tongue as that? Yes, trust thou him to-night, and he will make thee truthful, and purge thee from thy profanity. But here is another; I dare not describe him. Look at him! He has lived an unchaste life, and strong are his passions; and he says, "Can I ever be recovered from my vile desires?" Oh, sir, my Lord can lay his hand on that hot heart of thine, and cool it down to a sweet sobriety of chastity. And thou, fallen woman, do not think that thou art beyond his powers; he shows himself mighty to save such as "the woman that was a sinner." Ah, if you are a slave to vile sins, Jesus can give perfect freedom from vicious habits. You young man there, you know that you have fallen into many sins which you dare not mention, which coil about your heart, and poison your life like serpents

writhing within your conscience. My Lord can take them all out of the soul, and deliver you from the results of their fiery venom. Yea, he can make you into a new creature, and cause you to be born again. He can make you love the things which you once hated, and hate the things which you aforetime loved, and turn the current of your thoughts in quite another way. You see Niagara leaping down its awful height, and you say, "Who can stop this?" Ay, indeed, who can stop it? But my Master can, and if he speaks to the Niagara of your lust, and says, "Cease thy raging!" it will pause at once; yea, if he bids the waters of desire leap up instead of down, you shall be as full of love to Christ as once you were full of love to sin. He made the sun to stand still, and caused the moon to pause upon the hill of Gibeah; and he can do all things. Spake he not the world out of nothing? And can he not create new hearts and right spirits in the souls of men who have been far off from him by wicked works? He can do so, and blessed be his name he will: the world of mind is as much beneath his control as that of matter. If thou believest, O man, to thee I may say as Peter did to Æneas, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole."

IV. Well, now, let us pass on to notice, next, that the MAN WAS MADE WHOLE. There was no imposture about it; he was made whole, and made whole there and then. Just fancy, for a minute, what would have been the result if he had not been made whole. What dishonour it would have been to Peter! Peter said, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole": but there lies Æneas as palsied as before. Everybody would say, "Peter is a false witness." Well now, I will not say that the preacher of the gospel must see souls saved, or else he is a false witness. I will not say that, but I will say that if ever my ministry, under God, does not save souls I will give it up; for it seems to me that if we do not bring souls to Christ we preachers are just good for nothing. What are we if we do not turn many to righteousness? Reapers who never reap, soldiers who never win a battle, fishermen who take no fish, and lights which enlighten no one. These are sad but true comparisons. Do I address any unsuccessful minister? I would not speak harshly to him, but I would speak very severely to myself if I were in his case. I remember the dream of a minister. He thought that he was in hell, and being there, he was dreadfully distressed, and cried out "Is this the place where I am to be for ever? I am a minister." A grim voice replied, "No, it is lower down for unfaithful ministers, much lower down than this." And then he awoke. Ah, and if we do not agonize till souls are brought to Christ, we shall have to agonize to all eternity. I am persuaded of it: we must have men saved, or else we shall be like Peter would have been if he had said, "Jesus Christ makes thee whole," and the man had not been made whole,—we shall be dishonoured witnesses.

What dishonour would have been brought upon the name of Jesus if the man had not been made whole. Suppose, my dear fellow sinner, you were to believe in Jesus Christ, and yet were not saved; what then? Oh, I do not like to suppose so, for it is almost a blasphemy to imagine it, but yet consider it for a moment. Believe in Jesus and not be saved! Then he has broken his word, or lost his power to save, either of which we are unwilling to tolerate for a minute. If thou

believest in Jesus Christ, as surely as thou livest Jesus Christ has saved thee. I will tell thee one thing,—if thou believest in Jesus Christ and thou art damned, I will be damned with thee. Come! I will risk my soul on that bottom as surely as thou wilt risk thine, for if the Lord Jesus Christ does ever lose a soul that trusts him he will lose mine : but he never will, he never can :—

“ His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep :
All that his heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.”

Rest ye in him and ye shall be saved, else were his name dishonoured.

And suppose that, like Æneas, you trusted Christ—if you were not saved, what then? Why, then the gospel would not be true. Shut up those churches, close those chapels, banish those ministers, burn those Bibles; there is no truth in any of them if a soul can believe in Jesus and yet not be saved. The gospel is a lie, and an imposture, if it be true that any poor sinner can put his trust in Jesus and not be healed of his sins; for thus saith the Lord of old, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” This is his last word to his church, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” If men believing are not saved from the power of sin, then the gospel is not true, and we are sent on a fool’s errand: but they *are* saved, blessed be the name of God, and the gospel is truth itself.

Oh, my dear hearer, fain would I urge thee to put thy trust in Jesus Christ to-night, by the experience which I and other believers have enjoyed; for some of us have relied on the name of the Redeemer, and he has saved us. We shall never forget the day, some of us, when we left off self-righteousness and believed in Christ to the salvation of our souls. The marvel was done in a minute, but the change was so great that we can never explain it, or cease to bless the Lord for it.

“Happy day! Happy day!
When Jesus washed my sins away.”

I recollect the morning when salvation came to me as I sat in a little Primitive Methodist chapel under the gallery, and the preacher said, “That young man looks unhappy;” and added, “Young man, you will never find peace except you look to Christ;” and he called out to me, “Look!” With a voice of thunder he shouted, “Young man, look! Look now!” I did look, I turned the eye of faith to Jesus at once. My burden disappeared, and my soul was merry as a bird let loose from her cage, even as it is now as often as I remember the blessed salvation of Jesus Christ. We speak what we do know; ours is no hearsay or second-hand testimony; we speak what we have felt and tasted and handled, and our anxiety is that you may know and feel the same. Remember, my dear hearer, that the way to use the gospel is to put it to yourselves like this. What is your name? I said, “John Brown,” just now, did I not? Suppose it is John Brown, then. Well, the gospel says, “He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting

life." Then it means, "If John Brown believes on Jesus he has everlasting life." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,"—"Then I, John Brown, believing and being baptized, shall be saved." Lay hold of it in that way. Perhaps you say, "But may I put my name to a promise, and appropriate it in that fashion?" Yes, you may, because there is nothing in the Bible to say that your name was left out from the list of those to whom the promise is made. If I were a beggar in the streets, and were very hungry, and I heard that there was a gentleman who was giving a good meal away, and that he had advertised that any beggar might come, I do not think I should say, "Well, my name is not down in his list." I should stop away when I found that he inserted an excluding clause, "Charles Spurgeon shall not have any of the food I distribute," but not till then. Until I read in black and white that he excluded me I should run the risk, and get in with the other hungry folk. Until he shut me out I would go. It should be his deed and not mine that kept me from the feast. Sometimes you say, "But I am not fit to go to Christ." The fittest way to go to Christ is to go just as you are. What is the best livery to wear when you go a-begging? I recollect some long time ago, when I lived not far from here, in the extremeness of my greenness, I gave a man who begged at the door a pair of patent leather boots. He put them on, and expressed great gratitude; but I met him afterwards, and I was not at all surprised to find that he had pulled them off. They were not at all the style of things to go about begging in. People would look at him and say, "What! you needing coppers while wearing those handsome boots? Your tale won't do." A beggar succeeds a deal better barefoot than in fine shoes. Rags are the livery of mendicants. When you go and beg for mercy at the hand of God, do not put on those pretty righteousnesses of yours, but go with all your sin and misery, and emptiness, and wretchedness, and say, "Lord, here am I. Thou hast said that Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. I am a soul that wants saving to the uttermost, and here I am. I have come. Lord, save me."

Now, summing all up: this is what you have to do, sinner, in order to be saved to-night, simply believe in Jesus Christ. I saw a young woman from America in the vestry some little time ago who came in great concern of soul to know the way of salvation, and I said to her, "Do you not see it? If you trust Christ, you are saved." I quoted the Scriptures which teach this great truth and made them plain to her, until the Holy Spirit opened her eyes; light came on her face in a moment, and she said, "I do see it. I trust Christ with all my heart: and I am to believe that I am saved because I trust Jesus, and he has promised to save believers?" "Yes," I replied, "you are getting on the rock now." "I feel," she said, "a deep peace beginning in my soul, but I cannot understand how it can be, for my grandfather belonged to the old school Presbyterians, and he told me he was six years before he could get peace, and had to be put into a lunatic asylum, for he was so miserable." Ah, yes, I have no doubt such cases have happened. Some will go seventeen thousand miles round about merely to go across a street, but there is no need for it. There it is—"The word is nigh thee, on thy lip and in thy heart. If with thy heart thou wilt believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ, and with thy mouth make confession of him, thou shalt be saved." There is naught to be done ; there is naught to be felt ; there is naught to be brought. No preparation is wanted. Come just as you are, and trust Christ to save you out and out this night, and you shall be saved. God's honour and Christ's word are pledged to it.

V. This is the last thing. WHEN ÆNEAS WAS HEALED HE ACTED IN CONFORMITY THEREWITH. "Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole : arise, and make thy bed." He did so. He rose directly and made his bed.

Now, if any of you say to-night, "I have believed in Jesus," remember you are bound to prove it. How prove it? Why, if you have believed in Jesus, you are made whole, and you are to go home and show people how whole you are. This man was palsied, and had been lying there prostrate eight years, and could never make his bed, but he proved he was healed by making his bed for himself. Perhaps here is a man who when he has entered his house has generally opened the door with an oath. If there is such a person here, and Christ saves you—he will wash your mouth out for you. You will have done with profane language for ever. Your wife will be surprised when you go home to hear how differently you talk. Perhaps you have been used to mix with rough companions in your work, and you have talked as they have done : if Jesus Christ has made you whole, there is an end to all filthy speaking. Now you will talk graciously, sweetly, cleanly, profitably. In years gone by you were angry and passionate ; if Jesus Christ has made you whole, you will be as tender as a lamb. You will find the old lion lifting his head and giving an occasional roar and a shake of his mane, but then he will be chained by the restraints of grace, while the meek and gentle lamb of the new nature will feed in pastures wide and green. Ah, if the Lord has saved you, the drunkard's ale-bench will have no more of you, for you will want better company than the seats of scoffers can afford you. If the Lord saves you, you will want to do something for him, to show your grateful love. I know this very night you will long to tell your children, and tell your friends, that Jesus Christ has made you whole. John Bunyan says that when he was made whole he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land about it. I do not wonder that he did. Tell anybody, tell everybody, "Jesus Christ has saved me." It is a sensation the like of which no man can imagine, if he has not felt it, to be made a new creature right away, in a moment. That surprises all who see it, and as people like to tell news—strange news—so does a new-born man long to go and tell others, "I have been born again : I have found the Saviour."

Now, mark, you will have to prove that this is so by an honest, upright, consistent, holy life,—not, however, by being merely sternly honest. If Christ has saved you, he will save you from being selfish. You will love your fellow men ; you will desire to do them good. You will endeavour to help the poor ; you will try to instruct the ignorant. He who truly becomes a Christian becomes in that very same day a practical philanthropist. No man is a true Christian who is un-Christ-like—who can live for himself alone, to hoard money or to make himself great. The true Christian lives for others : in a word, he lives for Christ.

If Christ has healed you, gentle compassion will saturate your soul from this time forth and for ever. O Master, thou who didst heal men's bodies in the days of thy flesh, heal men's hearts to-night, we pray thee.

Still this word more. Somebody says, "Oh, I wish I had Christ!" Soul, why not have him at once? "Oh, but I am not fit." You never will be fit; you cannot be fit, except in the sense in which you are fit even now. What is fitness for washing? Why, being dirty. What is fitness for alms? Why, being in distress. What is fitness for a doctor? Why, being ill. This is all the fitness that a man wants for trusting in Christ to save him. Christ's mercy is to be had for nothing, bribe or purchase is out of the question. I have heard of a woman whose child was in a fever and needed grapes; and there was a prince who lived near, in whose hothouse there were some of the rarest grapes that had ever been grown. She scraped together the little money she could earn, and went to the gardener and offered to buy a bunch of the royal fruit. Of course he repulsed her, and said they were not to be sold. Did she imagine that the prince grew grapes to sell like a market-gardener? And he sent her on her way, much grieved. She came again; she came several times, for a mother's importunity is great; but no offer of hers would be accepted. At last the princess heard of it and wished to see the woman; and when she came the princess said, "The prince does not sell the fruit of his garden;" but, snipping off a bunch of grapes and dropping them into a little bag, she said, "He is always ready to give it away to the poor." Now, here is the rich cluster of gospel salvation from the true vine. My Lord will not sell it, but he is always ready to give it away to all who humbly ask for it; and if you want it come and take it, and take it now by believing in Jesus.

The Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah lv.

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WHY THE HEAVENLY ROBES ARE WHITE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 24TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"—Revelation vii. 14.

OUR curiosity enquires into the condition of those who have newly entered heaven. Like fresh stars they have lit up the celestial firmament with an added splendour. New voices are heard in the orchestra of the redeemed. In what condition are they at the moment of their admission to the heavenly seats? Their bodies are left behind, we know, to moulder back to mother earth, but how fare their unclothed immortal spirits? What now occupies those pure and perfect minds? We are not left in the dark upon this matter: our Lord Jesus Christ has brought immortality and life to light, and in the words of our text and the preceding and following verses we are informed as to these new comers, these recruits for the church triumphant. Were our text properly translated it would run thus: "these are they that come out of great tribulation," or who "are coming,"—in the present tense. If the word does not distinctly refer to those who have "just come," it certainly includes such. Those who "come" are those who have come, and those who shall come, but it must include those who are at this moment arriving, those whom I venture to call heaven's new-born princes, her fresh blooming flowers whose beauty for the first time is seen in Paradise. Lo, I see the newly departed passing through the river of death, ascending the other shore, and entering in through the gates into the city. What are these new comers doing? We find that they are not kept waiting outside, nor put through a quarantine, nor cast into purgatorial fires, but as they arrive from the great tribulation they are at once *admitted to holy fellowship*—"therefore are they before the throne of God": dwelling in the courts of the Great King, to go no more out for ever. Earthly courtiers only stand at times in their monarch's presence, but these abide for evermore before the throne of

God and of the Lamb, favoured to behold the face of God without a veil between, and to see the King in his beauty in the land that is very far off. How quickly has earth faded from their minds and heaven's glory flashed upon them! The sick bed and the weeping friends are gone, and the throne of their God and Saviour fills the whole field of their delighted vision.

They are *arrayed for holy service*, and arrayed at once, for they wear white robes fitted for their priestly service. It is true they have no material bodies, but in some mystic sense which is applicable to the spirit world these holy men wear a vesture which qualifies them for celestial worship and all the holy service of the heavenly state.

They are not only admitted to see God, and prepared to engage in his most glorious worship, but they are at once *permitted actually to commence their holy lifework* by serving God day and night in his temple. We find them already engaged in actual adoration, for they cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." These pure spirits yet have voices which our God who is a spirit hears and approves; their song is full of purest gospel truth, and their earnestness is shown by the loudness of their notes. They need no angels to instruct them in the manners and customs of the upper world, for even while they sojourned on earth their conversation was in heaven, and they are at home at once. They are not waiting till they have learned the song, but they know it already, for grace is the rehearsal of glory. They do not need to be initiated into the sacred mysteries, for they have had access within the veil while here below. They will begin their heavenly life at once, take up the tune just where they find it, and join in the hymn just as soon as they arrive; beginning at once to praise him that sitteth upon the throne, and to adore the Lamb. How sweet it is to think of those who have lately left us, that, though they broke off this mortal life as it were before it was complete, and left it a fragment, yet they do not begin life up yonder prematurely or abruptly, but exactly at the right time. The new singer takes his place in the choir just when his part is coming on, and takes up the key-note as if he had been there a century, and begins his song, with his white robe on and his palm branch in his hand, as one who is well prepared to take his part in the endless adoration. Sudden glory does not startle the inhabitants of heaven as sudden death startles the dwellers upon earth. The immigrants to heaven are expected, and the gates stand always open to welcome them. There are no untimely births into the church of the firstborn, each one cometh in his season.

As to the state and condition of the newly glorified, they are described to us still further in the verses which follow the text. It seems to me that those pure spirits who are without their bodies as yet, are pictured as being like the children of Israel when the great camp was pitched in the wilderness. In the desert the Lord God would have dwelt among them, had it not been for their sins: in heaven he does so dwell in the supremest sense. "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." Over the heads of the great camp in the wilderness there hung a cloud of glory, which in the daytime sheltered them from the great heat of the sun, and at night lit up the whole camp, so

that all the streets of that canvas city were brilliant through the whole night. That bright light indicated the presence of God : he did as it were hover over them, and cover them with his wing : but in heaven he shall be nearer still, and dwell among them. His presence shall sanctify, enlighten and overshadow all. The Shekinah, the holy and mystic light which indicated the presence of God in the tabernacle, was veiled from the sight of the multitude, but in heaven all shall behold the glory of the Lord, and be surrounded with it. The saints above enjoy a consciousness nearness and fellowship with the Lord, such as we cannot hope to rival on this side of Jordan. He shall *dwell among them*. Happy spirits, who have this felicity to have God indwelling them, abiding with them and surrounding them for ever ! Hence it is that they hunger no more, for as Israel fed upon the manna, so they feast on love divine ; they thirst no more, for as Israel drank of the rock, so are the glorified ones with Christ, and drink for ever of his love. "The sun shall not light on them nor any heat ;" how can it, when they are utterly withdrawn from the influence of materialism and screened from all evil influences of every kind by the matchless presence of the mighty God, who of old was vanguard and rearguard to his people, and for ever is their all in all. With the Lamb for their leader, what choice company they keep ! What hallowed paths they tread ! What sacred communications they receive ! What amazing raptures they feel ! With the Lamb to lead them to fountains of waters undiscovered by their feet aforetime, what fresh joy shall burst in upon them ! With God himself to be their comforter, how all regrets at having left beloved ones down below shall be driven away completely, and how completely shall their whole souls be filled with perfect bliss without a single briny tear to mar the joy.

In the vision before us, the most striking point about the newly arrived according to the speech of the elder and the remark of John was their *wearing white robes*. The venerable elder does not appear to have taken notice of much else except this, for he asks the question, "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they ?" That was the point to which he would direct John's thoughts—who can they be that shine so brightly there before the eternal throne ? Whence have they come in such attire ? So this morning we will consider first, *what did their white robes indicate ?* Secondly, *how did they come by them ?* and lastly, *what is the lesson of the text to us ?*

I. WHAT DID THESE WHITE ROBES MEAN ? Why were they white robed ? Of course it is all symbol, these spirits wore no garments, because they had no bodies, but their robes signify their character, office, history, and condition.

The white robes show first *the immaculate purity of their character*. "They are without fault before the throne of God." Into the heavenly place no sin could possibly enter, and they have brought no sin with them ; no, not so much as the trace or relic or scar of a sin. They are "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," presented holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable in the sight of the Most High. White signifies perfection ; it is not so much a colour as the harmonious union and blending of all the hues, colours, and beauties of light. In the characters of just men made perfect we have the combination of all

virtues, the balancing of all excellencies, a display of all the beauties of grace. Are they not like their Lord, and is he not all beauties in one? Here a saint has an evident excess of the red of courage, or the blue of constancy, or the violet of tenderness, and we have to admire the varied excellencies and lament the multiform defects of the children of God; but up yonder each saint shall combine in his character all things which are lovely and of good repute, and his garments shall be always white to indicate completeness, as well as spotlessness, of character. We ought to note that the white here meant is bright and shining, to indicate that their characters shall be lustrous and attractive. They shall be the admiration of principalities and powers as they see in them the manifold wisdom of God. In these white garments they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Our Lord's garments in the transfiguration are not only said to have been "whiter than any fuller could make them," but they are said to have been glistening and "white as the light." The redeemed before the throne shine like stars before the eyes of all who are favoured to gaze upon their assembly. What a glory there will be about the character of a child of God! Even those who have seen it long shall still be filled with wonder at what grace has done. God himself shall take delight in his people when he has made them "white in the blood of the Lamb." That the white robes must refer to their own character is clear; I have taken it for granted that it is so, because the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is the righteousness of the saints, cannot possibly be meant here, since that cannot be either defiled or washed. To speak of washing the righteousness of Christ in the blood of Christ would not only be an erroneous idea, but it would involve a conglomeration of metaphor not to be tolerated for a moment. The white robes here intended are the personal characters of the saints as they appear before God himself. They are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and so cleansed that they are absolutely perfect.

By "white robes" we also understand *the fitness of their souls for the service to which they are appointed*; they were chosen before all worlds to be kings and priests unto God: but a priest might not stand before the Lord to minister until he had put on his appointed linen garments; and therefore the souls which have been taken up to heaven are represented in white robes to show that they are completely fitted for that divine service to which they were ordained of old, to which the Spirit of God called them while they were here, and in which Jesus Christ leads the way, being a priest for ever at their head. They are able to offer the incense of praise acceptably, for they are girded with the garments of their office. We know not all the occupations of the blessed, but we know that they are all such as can be performed by a royal priesthood; and hence the priestly garb betokens that they are ready to do the will of God in all things, and to offer perpetually the sacrifice of praise unto the Lord.

"White robes" also signify *victory*. I should think that in almost every nation white has indicated the joy of triumph. Often when generals have returned from battle they and the warriors have been clothed in white, or have ridden upon white horses. True, the Romans adopted purple as their imperial colour, and well they might, for their victories

and their rule were alike bloody and cruel; but the Christ of God sets forth his gentle and holy victories by white: it is on a "white cloud" that he shall come to judge the world, and his seat of judgment shall be "the great white throne." Upon a "white horse" he shall ride, and all the armies of heaven shall follow him on white horses. Lo, he is clothed with a "white" garment down to the feet. Thus has he chosen white as the symbolic colour of his victorious kingdom, and so the redeemed wear it, even the newly born, freshly escaped out of the great tribulation, because they are all of them more than conquerors. They wear the victor garb and bear the palm which is the victor symbol.

White is also the colour of *rest*. If a man desired to do a day's work in this poor grimy world, a snow-white garment would hardly suit him, for it would soon be stained and soiled. Hence the garments of toil are generally of another colour, more fitted for a dusty world. The day of rest, the day of Sabbath joy and pleasure is fittingly denoted by white garments. Well may the redeemed be thus arrayed, for they have finally put off the garments of toil and the armour of battle, and they rest from their labours in the rest of God.

Chiefly, white is the colour of *joy*. Almost all nations have adopted it as most suitable for bridal array, and so therefore these happy spirits have put on their bridal robes, and are ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Though they are waiting for the resurrection, yet are they waiting with their bridal garments on, waiting and rejoicing, waiting and chanting their Redeemer's praises, for they feast with him till he shall descend to consummate their bliss by bringing their bodies from the grave to share with them in the eternal joy.

So you see the white garments have a great deal of teaching about them, and if it were the object of my discourse to bring it out, I could well spend a full hour in describing what is meant; but I am rather driving at something else, and to that I invite you. May the Holy Spirit lead us into it.

II. Secondly, HOW DID THEY COME BY THOSE WHITE GARMENTS? How came they to be so white? It was the whiteness which struck the mind of the elder and of the apostle himself: what could be the cause of it? "Whence came they?" said he.

Those characters were not so pure, or, in other words, those garments were not so white by nature. They are washed, you see, and therefore they must once have been stained. They have "washed their robes," they were not, therefore, always white. No! Original sin has stained the character of all the sons of Adam. There is about us from the very beginning an abundance of leprous spots, the garment is not white when first we put it on. How shall he be clean that is born of woman? Then, alas, there are by nature upon the robe the stains of actual sin which we committed before conversion: we altogether tremble at the remembrance of it, and we should utterly despair if we did not know that it has been washed away in the blood of the Lamb. Then, alas, there are the iniquities we have committed since we have known the Lord, and some aspects the most baneful and the most sinful of all our transgressions; for we have transgressed against eternal love since we have known it, and rebelled against an electing, redeeming, forgiving God. Ah, this is sin indeed! Amongst the hosts above there is not

one robe but what needed to be washed, they all required it, for by nature they were all stained by sin in many ways. Do not think of one saint who has gone to his reward above as being in any way different in nature from yourselves; they were all men of like passions with us, men who had within them the same tendencies to sin. If we suppose them to have been naturally better, they will not yield us so much stimulus, for then we shall ascribe their victory to the betterness of their nature, and shall despair for ourselves; but if we recollect that they were just as fallen, and just as tainted with inbred sin as we are, we shall then rejoice and take courage; for if they have entered heaven with unspotted garments, having washed them, why should not we be washed also and be white as they?

But it might be suggested that, perhaps, they came to their rest by a cleaner way than that which now lies before us. Possibly there was something about their course of life, their surroundings, the condition of the age in which they lived, which helped them to keep their garments white. No, my brethren, it was not so; they passed along the road of tribulation, and that tribulation was not of a less trying kind than ours, but was severe enough to be called "great tribulation": so that they followed the same pathway as ourselves.

"Once they were mourning here below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard as we do now,
With sins and doubts and fears."

Their road was just as miry as ours, and perhaps even more so: they came through every slough and water-splash, bespattering their garments even as we do, and sorrowing because of it even as we do; but they went where we go, even to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and they washed their garments white. How this ought to assist us to feel that albeit our pathway is one in which we meet with innumerable temptations, yet inasmuch as all the glorified have come up white and clean from it, by virtue of the atoning blood, even so shall we!

But I want to conduct you a little further into the central meaning of the text. Brethren, their garments came to be white *through a miracle of grace*, through nothing less than a miracle of grace because they came through *the* great tribulation, where everything tended to defile them. The word "*the*" ought to have been in the translation: it is marvellous how the translators came to leave it out: the text should read, "These are they which come out of *the* great tribulation." Note, also, that the half Latin word "tribulation," upon which so many dwell as signifying threshing, is not in the Greek, but is merely a translator's word, and therefore not to be insisted on. The original signifies simply oppression and affliction of any sort. Now, all the children of God have had to go through *the* great oppression and to endure its ills. What am I driving at? I will show you. I do not think that the text refers to some one great persecution, but to the great conflict of the ages in which the seed of the serpent perpetually molests and oppresses the seed of the woman. The strife began at the gates of Eden when the Lord said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and

thou shalt bruise his heel." Satan takes care to nibble at the heel, though his own head has been broken by our great Lord. There is an hereditary conflict, a great tribulation, always to be suffered by the saints below, for he that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the spirit. The enmity takes all sorts of shapes, but from the beginning even until now it is in the world. Now, the white robed ones had come out of that continuous and general conflict uninjured: like the three holy children who came out of the furnace with not so much as the smell of fire upon them. Some of them had been slandered: men of the world had thrown handfuls of the foulest mud upon them, but they washed their robes and made them white. Others of them had come out of remarkable temptations from men and devils: Satan himself had poured his blasphemies into their ears, so that they verily thought they should themselves blaspheme; they were tried by the most defiling of temptations, but they overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and were delivered from every polluting trace of the temptation by the efficacy of the atoning sacrifice. Some of them were persecuted cruelly, and trodden down as mire in the streets, and yet they rose to glory white as snow. They went through fire and through water, and wandered without a certain dwelling-place; they were made to be as the offscouring of all things, but they came uninjured and unspotted out of it all. I would have you look upon the text as an exclamation of surprise uttered by the elder to John, as they both mentally looked down upon the great struggle going on in the world below, where temptations and trials of all sorts surround the chosen company of the church militant. They watched the warring band and marked that a goodly host of men, though they fought in the thick of the battle and were covered with dust and had their garments rolled in blood, yet instead of perishing on the battle field, as they seemed to do, came up out of it, came up wearing spotless and shining garments. Here was the wonder of it that they were white after such a trial. I have heard this text used as if the great tribulation had assisted in purifying them, whereas it was that which would have in itself defiled them, it was that which by its own natural operation tended to make them foul: the marvel was that they came out of it and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Now let me conduct you into the thought which we have at this moment laid before you, namely, that it was by the operation of the blood of Christ, and by nothing else, that the glorified saints were made clean. They came out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Tribulation, or affliction, or oppression, call it which you will, is overruled by a miracle of divine grace so as to benefit the believer, but in and of itself it is not the cleanser but the defiler of the soul. Affliction of itself does not sanctify anybody, but the reverse. I believe in sanctified afflictions, but not in sanctifying afflictions. Afflictions of themselves arouse the evil which is in us to an unwonted energy, and place us in positions where the rebellious heart is incited to forsake the Lord. This will be seen if we consider the matter closely. The great tribulation of which I have to speak is, under some aspects of it, a sin-creating thing, and if the victorious ones had not perpetually gone to the blood they would

never have had their garments white ; it was that alone which made and kept them white, they were familiar with the atonement and knew its cleansing power

Brethren, *some of the trials of the saints are evidently intended by those who are the instruments of them to make them sin.* Satan and wicked men assail the saints with this as their end and aim. Satan, for instance, when he tried Job did it with the distinct intention of causing him to curse God to his face. He did not at all veil his intent even before the throne of God, but boldly avowed it, and said, "Put forth now thy hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." The Lord had far other designs, but the object of the affliction as far as Satan was concerned was to remove Job from his integrity, and cause him to blaspheme. Satan is very wise, and he knows, if we do not, that affliction is an admirable instrument for his purpose, and so much tends to make a man sin that if he does not fly to the blood of Jesus to counteract the tendency of the tribulation he will speedily fall. What would Job have done had he not known that his Redeemer lived ? As it is with the prince of tempters so is it with those who serve him, they vex the saints in order to make them sin. When ungodly men persecute the children of God, whether it be by scoffing at them, or by injuring them in their estates or persons, their direct object is make them renounce their religion, and forsake Christ ; or if this cannot be done, they aim at making them dishonour their profession by sin. Has not this been the real object of all persecution, from the days of the chief priests and Pharisees even until now ? If they can make the saints sin, their end is gained. So that that part of the great tribulation which comes from Satan and the world is directly designed to make us sin against the Lord. The saints of God are preserved from the great transgression, and wherein the influence of these troubles does make them sin, as it made Job sin in a certain way, and as no doubt it caused the martyrs many a secret sin, even though they were triumphant over death : as for this, I say they are cleansed from it by the blood of the Lamb, and so the machinations of the enemy are defeated at every point.

Tribulation of any kind is pretty sure to make us feel the need of the precious blood, because *it brings sin to remembrance.* The widow of Sarepta said to the prophet, "Art thou come to bring my sin to remembrance and to slay my son ?" Some sins never trouble the conscience until trial shows them up, and makes the heart tender about them. Trouble like a strong electric light casts another colour over the formerly dark scene, and we discover what we had forgotten. Trials work a degree of tenderness of spirit, and so make sin conspicuous to the weeping eye, and to the troubled heart. Many a man when in great trouble about other matters has also begun to be in deep distress on account of sin. And oh, dear friend, if thou art passing through any portion of the great tribulation, and its effect upon thee is to make thine old sins come up before thee, fly to the blood, I pray thee ! That is the only way by which thy faith can keep her hold. You can only believe in a sin pardoning God by going to the cleansing fountain ; for when sin is vividly seen pardon is known to be impossible except through the divine atonement.

Tribulation has a *tendency to create, even in good men, new sins* : sins into which they have never fallen before. "Brother," thou sayest, "I shall never repine against God." How knowest thou that? Thou sayest, "I have never done so unto this hour." I answer, why shouldst thou have done so? Hath not the Lord set a hedge about thee and all that thou hast—why shouldst thou repine? Are not thy wife and children about thee? Art thou not in health and strength? Why, then, shouldst thou murmur? There is small credit in being satisfied when you have all that you want. But suppose the Lord were to strip thee of all these things, O man, I fear me thou mightest murmur as others have done before thee, and the sin of rebellion to which thou hast been a stranger might yet triumph over thee. Art thou better than others? Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. You will need to wash your robes even as others have done.

In some men tribulation works a very fierce temptation to distrust. Ah, we think we have a deal of faith until we want it, and then when the time comes we who have taught faith to others find that we have little enough ourselves. Ah, how unbelief will insinuate itself, and defy us to drive it out. Sharper and blacker doubts than we dare speak of will come, such as "Is there a providence. Is there a God?" Ah, we must away to the blood, or else this tribulation will drive us into atheistic questions and cover us with horrible sins which will dishonour God and wound ourselves.

Tribulation, too, has a wonderful tendency to stir up all the old sins. While things go well with us, that cage of unclean birds will hardly peep or chatter, but affliction comes and stirs them all up, and how horribly they hoot and call to each other. Ah, my perfect brother, you do not know what a host of devils nestle inside your bosom. Whenever I hear a brother talk of ceasing from conflict, I think how quiet the devils in his soul are keeping, and how they are chuckling at his folly. Sins swarm most where pride swears that there are none. There is an ocean of sin within the heart of any one of us, and it only wants a trouble to stir the polluted mass, and we shall see what it is like. Just put you, who are so very good in your own esteem, into certain positions, and your mighty fine holiness will crack and blister like so much varnish in the sun. There lies lurking in the soul even of the most sanctified believer before he gets to heaven enough of sin to set the world on a blaze, and it only wants a fierce breach of strong temptation to set the embers, which seemed as if they were all quenched, blazing away like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. The fire of sin would soon burn our souls to destruction if Christ did not interfere. See, then, my brethren, we must hasten away to the blood of atonement. You see how the two things are mentioned together—the tribulation and the blood-washing; and they must go together or else there will be no white robe for us at last, no character which will stand the gaze of the thrice holy Lord. The product of tribulation by itself will not be a white robe, but washing in the blood will give us that honourable array. Let us seek continually to have the atoning blood applied to cleanse our souls from the stains which tribulation is sure to make.

So, too, beloved brethren, *great trials are wonderfully apt to reveal the weakness of our graces and the number of our infirmities.* It is sure

to make the believer see what an unbeliever he is, to make the man who is full of love see how little he loves, to make the child of patience find out how impatient he is, to make the strong learn his weakness and the wise man learn his folly. Ah, captain, thou art a wise mariner, so thou thinkest and so thou art in a moderate squall or in even an ordinary storm, but if the Lord were to let loose all his winds against thee, I tell thee what thou wouldst do,—thou wouldst reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and be at thy wits' end. Think of that. Those who have never done business on deep waters do not understand this. Your pleasure yachts which run between the islands, and up the rivers, and in and out of the creeks, know nothing about storms, and their crews are quite able to handle a vessel, so they say, but Atlantic storms would soon take the conceit out of them. Believe me, when a whirlwind takes the ship and twists her round, and plays with her as with a toy, seafaring becomes no amusement. When the barque mounts to heaven and then goes down into the abyss, it melts the soul because of heaviness, and forces a man to cry out for mercy. Spiritual storms make a man discover what utter weakness he is, and then he is wise to fly to the blood of the Lamb. Oh, what a sweet restorative is found in the atoning sacrifice! God in Christ Jesus reconciled to me by the blood once shed for many is my great joy! How the soul seems to get rid of all the mischief which tribulation otherwise would breed in her, when she bathes in that sacred fount. Then, indeed, she puts on her white robes and chants a victorious song.

III. Now, thirdly, WHAT LESSON COMES OUT OF THIS? What is the teaching of the passage? The teaching is this, beloved, that when we are in tribulation then is the time to have the most diligent dealings with the precious blood of the Lamb.

I would say to you, first, *meditate on it*. A sight of Christ in his agony is a wondrous cure for our agonies. That crown of thorns about thy head, O my Master, this shall ease my throbbing brow; those eyes so red with weeping, shall look consolation into my soul; thy cheeks be-stained with spittle shall make me forget the reproach I bear for thysake. When I see thee, thyself, stripped naked and hung up on the cross, the sight will make me think highly of being slandered and persecuted for thy sake! What are our griefs compared to his? On the table of sorrow they place the little drinking cups for us little children; but for our great elder brother, what a flagon did they set for him! Yet he drank it, saying, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." When we see the elder brother drinking of the same cup as ourselves it makes us cheerfully put ours to our lip, and pledge him in fellowship. "O Lord Jesus, shall we refuse what thou dost take! Nay, glorious brother of our souls, we will be true brothers; we will prove our fellowship in this sad communion, and drink with thee of thy cup, and be baptised with thy baptism." So, you see, meditation on the blood of Jesus helps us in our tribulation by letting us see how much greater his woe was than ours.

Another sweet consolation grows out of our subject is this—we see how great his love was to us. Perhaps he has seen fit to smite us, and we think him angry; but we know he loves us, because we see him bleed. If you will only follow Christ through Gethsemane, and watch him for a while on Calvary, and watching with him for one hour, begin to taste

his sufferings, you will say, "My Master, oh, how thou lovest me. I perceive that thine is love which many waters cannot quench, which death itself cannot drown. Then if thou lovest me so thou lovest me even in this my affliction, and I will rejoice in it. I cannot doubt thy love, for thy blood seals the truth of it; and therefore am I confident under thy chastening hand.

Meditation also comforts us when we follow another line of reflection and say within ourselves—Jesus triumphed,—and how? By suffering! The victories of Christ were not obtained by crushing others, but by being crushed himself. His way to the throne was downward through the grave. He shows us the power of weakness and the sublimity of suffering ridicule. Though here rejected, despised, and made nothing of, he is now exalted above all principalities and powers. Well, then, the heart argues, so shall I be honoured and glorified by suffering. If I endure patiently and hold on my way, flying still to the precious blood, I shall in my weakness find my strength, in my sense of sinfulness I shall find purity in Christ, and in death shall find my everlasting life. So you see there is something even in meditating upon the blood of the Lamb.

But, beloved, the chief thing is this,—in all times of tribulation the great matter is to have the blood of Christ *actually applied to the soul*. If thou lie asoak in the atonement, if thou put thy broken heart to sleep on the breast of Christ, hard by his wound, thou wilt get peace by this method better than by any other. "How so?" says one. Why, if the blood be applied to the conscience it will breathe such peace through the soul, such sweet peace, that nothing else will be able to ruffle and disturb you. I have known in hospitals where there have been foul gases and ill smells that they have burned choice herbs and odoriferous plants, and so have killed the noxious odours with sweet perfumes. Oh for a little of Christ's blood sprinkled in the chambers of the soul! It is better than frankincense or calamus; it will make death sweet, and cause the chamber of affliction to smell deliciously with Christ's precious name. If sin be pardoned I am secure; if Christ stands in my stead, and his precious blood pleads for me, I am content to lie down at his feet, and say, "Do what thou wilt now thou hast pardoned me! Do what thou wilt, Lord, for I am forgiven!" Such is the peace-giving power of the blood.

When the blood is applied to the soul there is another gracious result: it takes the sting out of affliction by making us know that there is nothing penal in it. If Christ was punished in my stead for my sin, then I never can be punished for my sin, and therefore whatever I may have to endure daily by way of trial or suffering, there is no punishment in it. There may be the Father's loving and wise chastisement, and doubtless so there is, but there is never a punishment such as a judge inflicts as a penalty for transgression. God bringeth no charge against his people,—how can he? It is he that justifies them: and as he has no charge to bring, certainly he never inflicts a punishment. Who is he that condemneth since Christ hath died? Are we not strengthened to bear the tribulation when we know that it does not come upon us as a punishment for sin? Our Father's providence has no wrath in it, or if it has wrath at all it is that "little wrath" we read of in Isaiah,—

"In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee."

And, oh, brethren, if the blood of Christ be applied to the soul (and let us ask that it may, whether we are in great tribulation or not), we are assured that the end will be glorious. We are all in the great tribulation in one way or other, we are fighting and contending, and must do so to the end, but that end is guaranteed to us: the blood of Jesus Christ gives us a sweet assurance that it is all well with us, and shall be well with us for ever, and so it opens the gates of heaven to us, and cries, "Courage! courage! The battle is sharp, but it will soon be over, and there awaits for you a victor's crown." May not the soldier lift up his head, and wipe his face from the sweat of battle, and say, "Then I will fight it through; yes, in God's name I will fight it through. What though this wound seemed to have stunned me for a moment, and almost cleft my skull, I will fight it through if such be the promise and the reward. I will stir my soul, and the Holy Spirit shall arouse it, to put on a noble daring, and on I will go to win for Christ. Well may I bear his cross since he prepares my crown." That is the sweet effect of the blood, and I ask that every one here of us, tried or not, may feel it now to the praise and glory of his grace. O divine Spirit, grant us this grace.

What do you do, I wonder, who have not the blood of Christ to flee to? Ah, what do you do in time of sorrow who have no Christ to help you? I will ask you that question, and leave it to ring through your souls. Remember, when you feel you need him, my Lord is ready, for the fountain is still opened for sin and for uncleanness. You have but to wash and be clean. A simple faith will obtain complete purification from all sin. God grant you may believe in Jesus at once. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation vii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—872, 877, 818.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 8TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”—Romans xii. 21.

THIS is a very pithy verse, and the form of it greatly assists the memory. It is worthy to be called a Christian proverb. I would recommend every Christian man to learn it by heart, and have it ready for use; for there are a great many proverbs, which convey a very different sense, and these are often quoted to give the weight of authority to unchristian principles. Here is an inspired proverb; carry it with you, and use it as a weapon with which to parry the thrusts of the world's wisdom. “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Observe that the text appears to give us a choice between two things, and bids us choose the better one. You must either be overcome of evil, or you must yourself overcome evil: one of the two. You cannot let evil alone and evil will not let you alone. You *must* fight, and in the battle you must either conquer or be conquered. The words before us remind me of the saying of the Scotch officer to the Highland regiment when he brought them up in front of the enemy and said, “Lads, there they are: if ye dinna kill them they'll kill you.” So does Paul marshal us in front of evil, and like a wise general he puts us on our mettle by saying, “Overcome, or be overcome.” There is no avoiding the conflict, no making truce or holding parley, no suspension of hostilities after a brief skirmish, but the battle must be fought through to the end, and can only close with a decided victory to one or the other side. Soldiers of Christ, do you long debate which of the two to choose, victory or defeat?

To be utterly overcome of evil would be a very dreadful thing. I shall say but little about it, because I trust we shall, by divine grace, be upheld so as never to know by experience what it is to be overcome of evil! May we be “more than conquerors through him that loved us.” May we be happily ignorant of what it is to be vanquished by the powers of evil, and remain like the British drummer

boy who did not know how to beat a retreat, for he had never had any use for such a thing. May we not know the dishonour and misery of being overcome of evil, because divine grace continually giveth us the victory. When we are overcome of evil, even for a moment, it discovers the sad weakness of our spiritual life. We must be babes in grace and sadly carnal still, if sin is allowed to master us. If we were stronger in the Lord and in the power of his might we should overcome the world itself by faith: did not John write unto young men and say, "Ye are strong, and have overcome the wicked one." If we are overcome of evil, even for a moment, it will cause us great sorrow if we are in our right mind. A tender conscience will be greatly vexed as soon as defeat is sustained, and in looking back upon our fall, if fall we do, it will be a daily grief to us that we suffered ourselves to be overcome by evil at all. To be overcome of evil is dishonouring to our Lord, and opens the mouths of adversaries. Those who watch for our halting will be sure to make much of it. "Report it, report it," say they, and they do report it through the length and breadth of the land, that a servant of Christ has been overcome of evil. And if to be overcome of evil were not occasional but were continuous, if it could be said of our whole life that we were overcome of evil, it would prove that we were none of Christ's; for he that is born of God overcometh the world. Our Lord Jesus said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," and he makes all his true disciples partakers of this victory. Only to conquerors are the great promises of the book of Revelation given—"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the house of my God." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne." To be defeated in the battle of life would prove that we did not belong to that conquering seed which, if its heel be bruised, shall nevertheless break the foeman's head. Fix it, then, in your minds that evil is to be overcome; it is a matter of necessity that we wage this war and succeed in it. We must needs triumph over the powers of darkness.

Few are the words, but weighty is the meaning of our text. In one sententious sentence the conflict is set before us, and the sword of the battle is put into our hands. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil *with good*." Good is the only weapon which in this dread conflict we are permitted to use, and we may rest assured it will be sufficient and effectual. To use any other weapon is not only unlawful but altogether impossible, for he who wields the sword of evil is no longer Christ's soldier at all.

The reference in the text is to personal injuries, and therefore we shall confine ourselves to that one point, though the principle is capable of very great extension. In fighting with sin and error our weapons must be holiness and truth, and these alone: it is a wide subject, and I will not venture upon it. That personal injury is referred to in my text is clear from the preceding verses, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."

With regard to the evil of personal injury, *the common method is to overcome evil with evil*: let us talk about it. Secondly, *the divine method is to overcome evil with good*: let us speak of that; and this will no doubt exhaust our time. As this is a very practical subject let us entreat the Holy Spirit to teach us the will of Christ, and then to enable us to obey it in all things. I shall be much disappointed if the subject does not humble as well as instruct us, and if it does this it will be well for us to fly at once to the blood of the atonement, that we may be purged from former faults and cleansed for future holiness.

I. THE COMMON METHOD OF OVERCOMING INJURIES IS OVERCOMING EVIL WITH EVIL. "Give him a Roland for his Oliver." "Give him as good as he sends." "Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander." "Be six to his half dozen." I might go on with a score of proverbs, all inculcating the sentiment of revenge, or at least of meeting evil with evil.

I have to observe that the overcoming of evil with evil is in the first place *a most natural procedure*. It suggests itself to any fool to overcome evil with evil: a lunatic or idiot would do that. You need not train your children to it, it will be suggested in their infancy, and they will strike the floor upon which they fall, and beat the post against which they stumble, to punish it for their hurt; it is natural, very sadly natural. A sort of instinct suggests it, the instinct of the worm which turns if it be trodden on. This instinct says, "Surely we are not to suffer evil without resenting it, and what can we do better than to treat others as they treat us?" It must be admitted, also, that there is a show of justice about such a method of combating evil. Why should not a man be made to suffer who makes me suffer? And if he does me wrong why should I not defend myself and make him smart for making me smart? I freely admit that this is exceedingly natural, and has a show of justice about it? But to which part of us is it natural? Think for a minute. Is it natural to the new created spirit which dwells in believers, or is it natural to us because there is a part of us which is animal? Is it the new man in us which suggests revenge? Or is it the flesh, the mere animal in us which strikes out to avenge itself? A moment's reflection will let you see that the returning of evil for evil is natural to the animal nature, but that it is not, and never can be, natural to the new-created spirit whose nature is like the God from which it came, namely love, and gentleness, and kindness. "Good for evil is Godlike; good for good is man-like; evil for good is devil-like; evil for evil,"—what is that? I quote it to prove my point. It is beast-like; it is like the beast which kicks because it is kicked, gores because it is gored, and bites because it is bitten. Surely we cannot allow the lower part of our triple nature to dictate to our heaven-born spirit. We cannot let the servant be the master. We will be natural, but the nature which we will follow shall be that which we received in our regeneration, when we were made partakers of the divine nature, and enabled to escape the corruptions of the world. That returning evil for evil looks like rough and ready justice I have confessed, but then is any man prepared to follow out for himself, and in his own case this rule of justice? Is he prepared to stand before God and receive evil for his evil? "He shall have justice without mercy that sheweth n-

mercy." Is he willing to stand before God on the same terms as he would have the offending one stand before himself? Nay, our best, and indeed our only hope must lie in the mercy of God who freely forgives offences. We must look up to infinite love, and entreat the Lord to have mercy upon us according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses; and therefore we must render mercy to others. To recompense evil for evil is natural, but may God deliver us from the nature which makes it natural? It is just, no doubt, after a fashion, but from that sort of justice may our Redeemer rescue us!

Again, it is admitted that the art of returning evil for evil is very, *very* easy. If, my dear friend, you make it a rule that nobody shall ever insult you without having to pay for it, nor treat you with disrespect without meeting his match, you need not pray God in the morning to help you to carry out your resolve. There will be no need to wrestle in prayer that you may be graciously enabled to take vengeance on your adversaries, and stand up for your rights: you can do that decidedly better by trusting to yourself than by looking to God; indeed you dare not look to God about it. The devil will help you, and between your own passion and the evil one the thing may be very easily managed. There will be no reason for watchfulness, you need not be on your guard, or keep your spirit in check; on the contrary, you may give to the very worst part of your nature the greatest possible licence, and go a-head according to the rage of your passionate spirit. Prayer and humility of mind will of course be quite out of the question. Nor will there be any need for faith; you will not commit your case unto God and leave it there, you will fight your own battles, wipe off old scores as you go on, and place your dependence on fierce speeches, on your mighty fists, or on the law and the policeman. Christian graces will be too much in your way for you to think of them. Gentleness, meekness, forbearance, forgiveness—you will bid good-bye to these and cultivate the virtues of a savage or of a bull-dog. All this is wonderful easy, though it may be that ere long it will turn out to be hard.

Now, I put it to Christians, whether that which is so very easy to the very worst of men can ever be the right procedure for those who ought to be the best of men. If the divine plan of love be difficult and requires great grace to enable you to follow it, and I freely admit that it does, if it be very difficult to maintain it, and will require much prayer, much watchfulness, and much conquest of yourself, is it not, therefore, the more sure to be right? As for that which is so easy, let that be left to publicans and sinners, but as for you who have received more mercy of God than other men, should you not render more? You believe yourselves to be twice born, you have received a new and heavenly life; what do ye more than others? Ought ye not to show that there is more in you than in others, by letting more come out of you than comes out of others? Much more is expected of us than of the unregenerate, naturally and rightly expectation runs high in reference to men who make such high professions; and if the professed Christian be no better in his daily conversation than the ungodly, depend upon it he is no Christian man at all. We possess a higher life, and we are lifted to a nobler platform than the common sons of men, and therefore we must lead a nobler life and be guided by sublimer principles. Let the children of darkness

meet evil with evil, and carry on their wars and fightings, their strifes and their envyings, and their malice and their revenge: but as for you, O believers, ye are the children of the God of love, and love must be your life. You have been renewed in the spirit of your minds, and you must not be conformed to this world, but be transformed into the likeness of Christ your Master. Evil for evil should be a principle detested by you, and such should be your loving spirit that it ought to be no longer easy to recompense evil with evil, but hard, yea impossible, to bring you to do anything of the kind. Revenge and fury should be as alien to the spirit of a child of God as they would be to an angel before the throne.

By many to return evil for evil has been judged to be the *more manly* course. Years ago if a gentleman imagined himself to be insulted, it was necessary according to the code of honour then in vogue for him either to shed the blood of the offending person, or at least to expose himself to the like peril of his life. Thank God, that murderous custom is now almost entirely gone from the face of the earth. The spirit of Christianity has by degrees overcome this evil, but there still abides in the world the idea that to stand up for yourself, just to let people know what you are, never to knuckle down to anybody, but to defend your own cause and vindicate your honour, has something extremely manly about it; but to yield, to submit, to be patient, to be meek, to be gentle, is considered to be unworthy of a man of spirit. They call it showing the white feather and being cowardly, though to my mind, he is the bravest man who can bear the most. Now, Christian men, who is your model of a man? You do not hesitate for a second, I am sure. There is but one model of a Christian man, and that is the man Christ Jesus. Will you then remember that whatever is Christly is manly, and whatsoever you think to be manly which is not Christlike, is really unmanly, as judged by the highest style of man. The Lord Jesus draws near to a Samaritan village, but they will not receive him, though he was always kind to Samaritans. Good John, gentle John, becomes highly indignant, and cries, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" Jesus meekly answers, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." See him on another occasion: your Master has risen from his knees, with the bloody sweat still on his face; and Judas comes and betrays him, and they begin to handle him very roughly, and therefore, being highly provoked, brave Peter draws out his sword; and just to flesh it a little he cuts off the ear of Malchus. Hear how gently Jesus says, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword;" and so he heals that ear at once. Was that manly, do you think? Was it manly to refuse to call fire from heaven, and to touch and heal the wounded ear? To me it seems superlatively manly, and may such be my manliness and yours. Look at our Lord again before the high priest, when an officer of the court, incensed by his gentle answers, smites him on the cheek; what does Jesus say? Observe the difference between Christ and Paul. Paul says, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." Bravo, Paul, that is speaking up for yourself! We cannot blame thee, for who are we to censure an apostle? But look at Paul's Master and hear his words, "If I have spoken evil

bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" Is not the example of Jesus the more noble, the more Godlike? No man for a moment can put the two side by side without feeling that the Lord's conduct is by far the more sublime. It is not for us to imitate the servant of Christ when Christ himself excels him. Herein is victory when a man so overcomes himself that he replies to evil language with good and wise answers, but not with fierce and reviling words. O Christians, look ye at Christ, your Lord, who all his life long endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; who when he was reviled reviled not again, but submitted himself to him that judgeth righteously; and who even on the cruel tree, when he was mocked by those around him, had nothing to say but this—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." O Man of men, be thou the criterion henceforth of all the manliness at which we aim, and if others count the opposite to be manly let them count it so that will,—we are not of their mind.

Dear friends, we are now bold to affirm concerning the old, easy, natural method of returning evil for evil is that *it does not succeed*. Nobody ever did overcome evil by confronting it with evil yet. Such a course increases the evil. When the great fire was blazing at London Bridge it would have been a strange way of putting it out or keeping it under if our firemen had lit another fire close to it, or had pumped petroleum upon it; yet have I known some try to overcome the evil of a passionate temper in a man by becoming passionate themselves—rolling up another tar barrel to his fire, and so making it burn more furiously than ever. That is not conquering evil, nor is evil ever to be so conquered till water drowns the sea. A soft answer turneth away wrath, but anger excites more anger and more sin. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth, when it comes to be heaped up with fuel, and blown upon by furious winds.

What is worse, *when we assail evil with evil we are already ourselves overcome*: we have fallen into the very wrong which we complain of. As long as we can be calm and quiet we are victorious; but our breaking loose into an ill temper is our own defeat, and being overcome how can we overcome others? Brethren, the desire to return evil for evil does not succeed, because it injures us much more than it injures the person whom we seek to overcome. It has been said that the worst peace is better than the best war, and I believe almost anything is better than becoming angry. Scarcely any injury which we can ever sustain will so injure us as the injury which must arise to us from becoming angry and revengeful. Our enemies are not worth putting ourselves out about after all, and ten minutes of a palpitating heart, and of a disturbed circulation, causes us greater real damage in body than an enemy could inflict in seven years. Ten minutes of a fiery deluge overflowing the whole soul is a serious catastrophe, not to be often risked. Ten minutes in which you could not look Jesus in the face, ten minutes in which you would be ashamed to think of the Master's being near, ten minutes of broken fellowship—why this is a very serious self-torture. Let us not suffer it to please our foes. Alas, I have known professors keep up this wrath for days and weeks. How it must hurt a man to have his soul broiling all that time! To have his heart roasting in the fire of wrath. I feel it to be too painful to bear, even for a brief season;

it is bad for us in every sense, it hurts the mind permanently. Evil for evil is an edged tool which cuts the man who uses it: a kind of cannon which is most dangerous to those who fire it, both in its discharge and in its recoil. If you wished to destroy your enemy it would be wise to make him a present of this dangerous gun, and allow him to have the entire monopoly of it. I may truly say that when we oppose evil with evil, the evil which comes from us does us far more injury than any evil which we experience from others.

Again, the method of overcoming evil with evil *does not bear inspection*; it does not bear to be pondered and meditated on. Let any renewed man sit down for a minute after he has fallen into this practice, and ask himself as a Christian how he feels over it. He has usurped the place of God, for vengeance belongs only to the Judge of all the earth: how does he feel while acting as a usurper? Who am I that I should clamber to the throne of God and seize his sword and attempt to make myself judge and executioner among mankind! Will this bear consideration? Can a child of God thus see himself guilty of high treason against his King? How does a man feel when he is on his knees and remembers what he has done? How does he say "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us"? Do not his eyes fill with tears and is not his heart heavy with regret? How will your hard speeches and fierce actions appear when viewed from your dying bed? Will railing, and fighting, and law-suits be sweet memories there? Can such a thing as resenting evil with evil be the subject of our praise to God? Can we ever thank the God of love for enabling us to avenge ourselves? If we cannot pray about it, or praise about it, let us let it alone. Is there anything about it which we could whisper in the ear of Christ? Is there anything in it that will help us to nearer fellowship with him? Is there anything in anger and wrath which will prepare us for the business of earth or for the bliss of heaven?

It is bad, bad altogether. The best that I can say of it is that there may be rare occasions in which the provocation may be so great as to prevent others from condemning us, but then I must add that at such times we had better even then make no excuse for ourselves. The mind of Christ is that when smitten on one cheek we turn the other also, and that in no case we render unto any man evil for evil. Beloved brethren, I beseech you by the mercies of God that ye adjure for ever the method of seeking to overcome evil with evil, and that ye follow the example of your Lord, taking his yoke upon you and learning of him, for he is meek and lowly in mind.

II. Let us now consider THE DIVINE METHOD OF OVERCOMING EVIL WITH GOOD. And here I freely admit, to commence with, that this is a *very elevated mode of procedure*. "Overcome evil with good! Ridiculous!" says one; "Utopian," cries another; "It might do for Plato's republic," says a third, "but it will never do for ordinary, every day life." Well, I shall not blush to own that this is a very high course of conduct, and one which the mere worldling cannot be expected to follow, but of Christians we expect higher things. Ye have a high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and ye are therefore called to a high style of character by your glorious leader, the Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, if it be difficult I commend it to you because it is so; what is there which

is good which is not also difficult? Soldiers of Christ love those virtues most which cost them most. If it be hard to obtain, the jewel is all the more precious. Since there is grace sufficient to enable us to become like our Lord, we will labour after this virtue also, and obtain the great grace which its cultivation requires.

Notice that this text inculcates not merely passive non-resistance, though that is going a good way, but it teaches us active benevolence to enemies. "Overcome evil with good," with direct and overt acts of kindness. That is, if any man has done you a wrong, do not only forgive it, but avenge it by doing him a favour. Dr. Cotton Mather was never content till he had bestowed a benefit on every man who had in any way done him an injury. If anybody has slandered you, or treated you unkindly in any way, go out of your way to serve him. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him." You might say "Well, I am sorry for him, but really he is such a vagabond, I could not think of relieving him." Yet according to this Scripture, he is the very man you are bound to feed. If he thirst, do not say, "I hope somebody will relieve him; I feel no animosity to the man, but I am not going out of my way to give him drink." According to your Lord's command, he is the man to whom you must give drink. Go straightway to the well and fill your pitcher, and hasten to give him drink at once, and without stint. You have not merely to forgive and forget, but you are bidden to inflict upon the malicious mind the blessed sin-killing wound of your hearty and practical good-will. Give a blessing for a curse, a kiss for a blow, a favour for a wrong. "Oh," say you, "this is high, I cannot attain unto it." God is able to give you strength equal to this also. "It is hard," say you. Ah, but if you take Christ to be your Master, you must do what he tells you, and instead of shrinking because His command seems difficult to flesh and blood, you must cry, "Lord, increase my faith, and give me more of thy Spirit." To forgive to seventy times seven would not be hard to Christ, for he did it all His life long, and it will not be hard to you if the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. It is to this that you are called. It is a sublime temper, and it is exceedingly difficult and needs Divine grace, needs watchfulness, needs living near to God, but for these reasons it is all the more worthy of a follower of Jesus, and therefore we should aim at it with our whole heart.

The benefit of the method of returning good for evil is that *it preserves the man from evil*. If evil assails you, and you only fight it with good, it cannot hurt you, you are invulnerable. If any man curse you, and you answer him with a blessing, it is clear that the curse has not hurt you. It has not made you full of curses, or else one would come out of you. If a man has slandered you, but you never return him a reproachful word, he has not hurt your real character; the dirt which he has thrown has missed you, for you have none to throw back upon him. If when much provoked your temper still remains calm and quiet, the provocation has not touched you, the arrow has passed harmlessly by. The very thing your enemy wants is to make you descend to his level of anger and malice, but, as long as having much provocation you remain unprovoked, you vanquish him. Believe me you are provoking your adversary terribly if you are quite calm yourself, you are

disappointing him, he cannot insert his poisoned darts for you are clad in armour of proof. He tries to injure you, but he cannot; he fails to make you sin, and so he misses his mark. Do you not see what a wonderful armour it is? If God preserve you, so that you have nothing but good wishes and goodwill towards the man who hates you and seeks your ruin, then you are a conqueror indeed.

While this conduct protects you, *it is the very best weapon of offence against the opposer.* William Ladd had a farm in one of the states of America, and his neighbour, Pulsifer, was a great trouble to him, for he kept a breed of gaunt, long-legged sheep, as active as spaniels, which would spring over almost any sort of fence. These sheep were very fond of a fine field of grain belonging to Mr. Ladd, and were in it continually. Complaints were of no use, for Pulsifer evidently cared nothing for his neighbour's losses. One morning Ladd said to his men, "Set the dogs on those sheep, and if that won't keep them out, shoot them." After he had said that, he thought to himself, "This will not do. I had better try the peace principle." So he sent to his men and countermanded the order, and rode over to see his neighbour about those troublesome sheep. "Good morning," said he, but he received no answer: so he tried again, and got nothing but a sort of grunt. "Neighbour," said he, "I have come to see you about those sheep." "Yes," Pulsifer replied, "I know. You are a pretty neighbour to tell your men to kill my sheep! You a rich man, too, and going to shoot a poor man's sheep!" Then followed some very strong language, but Ladd replied, "I was wrong, neighbour, and I am sorry for it. Think no more about it. But, neighbour, we may as well agree. It seems I have got to keep your sheep, and it won't do to let them eat all that grain, so I came over to say that I will take them into my homestead pasture and I will keep them all the season; and if any one is missing you shall have the pick of mine." Pulsifer looked confounded, and then stammered out, "Now, Squire, are you in earnest?" When he found that Ladd really meant to stand to the offer, Pulsifer stood still a moment and then said, "The sheep shan't trouble you any more. When you talk about shooting I can shoot as well as you; but when you speak in that kind and neighbourly way I can be kind too." The sheep never trespassed into Ladd's lot any more. That is the way to kill a bad spirit: this is overcoming evil with good. If one had begun shooting, and the other had followed suit, they certainly would have been both losers, and both been overcome; but when the offended one made kindness his only return the battle was over. I remember years ago—though I only quote it, not for my own praise, but as an illustration—a certain person, a very good man too, did not admire a course of action that I felt bound to take. He was very angry, and called upon me to express his objections. At last he said, "If you do that I shall expose you in a pamphlet." I was in a gracious mood at that time, and was not to be ruffled in temper, nor yet turned from my course. I said to him quietly, "What do you think the pamphlet would cost?" "Oh," he said, "I don't know, but whatever it costs I shall do it." I answered, "Well, if you feel you ought to do it I should be sorry to see you go into debt, and therefore I will pay the printer's bill. I will trust you to give a truthful account of the

matter, and I am not at all ashamed to have my course of action made as public as possible, indeed I had rather it should be." He said he should not like to take any money from me. "Well," I replied, "perhaps you think that there might be some profits upon the sale; you shall be quite welcome to them. Your own friends can print for you, I will find the money, and you shall have the profit." I never heard any more of that pamphlet, and he is an exceedingly good friend of mine at the present moment, and will I hope always remain so.

To remain quiet is generally the way to baffle an adversary; indeed there is no weapon with which he can wound you. If you will not yield so as to give railing for railing, what is to be done with you? It is much the same as when a certain duke proclaimed war against a peaceful neighbour, who was resolved not to fight. The troops came riding to the town, and found the gates open as on ordinary occasions. The children were playing in the streets, and the blacksmith was at his forge, and the shopkeepers at their counters; and so, pulling up their horses, the soldiers enquired, "Where is the enemy?" "We don't know. We are friends." What was to be done under the circumstances but to ride home? So it is in life, if you only meet evil with good the bad man's occupation is gone.

It has sometimes happened that *evil men have been converted into good men*, and conquered thus in the very best possible way by seeing the patient Christian return good for evil. Some years ago a wicked, reprobate sailor was engaged in tarring a vessel, and while he was at his work there came along an old man well known in the district as a Christian. One of the sailor's mates standing by said to him, "Jack, you could not provoke that man; he is such a gentle-spirited man you could not put him out of temper." Jack was quite sure he could, and it became the subject of a wager. The wicked fellow took his bucket of tar with which he was tarring the keel, and dared to throw it right over the good old man. It was a most shameful assault, and the fellow deserved the utmost penalty of the law. The old man turned round and calmly said to him, "The Lord Jesus Christ has said that he who offends one of his little ones will find that it were better for him that a millstone had been tied about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea: now, if I am one of Christ's little ones, it will be very bad for you." Jack slunk back dreadfully ashamed of himself. What was more, the old man's quiet face haunted him; night after night he woke up, and in his dreams he saw that old man; and those tremendous words, "that it were better for him that a millstone were about his neck," broke him down before the mercy-seat of God. He asked and found pardon; he sought out the old man, confessed his fault, and received forgiveness. Who would not have a bucketful of tar thrown over him if it would save a soul? Now, suppose the old man had turned round on him, and uttered some fiery language, or struck at him, who could have blamed him? But then there would have been no triumph of grace in the Christian, and no conversion in the sinner. God has often made use of a gentle, meek, quiet, forbearing spirit to be the power with which he subdues the lionlike rebel, and turns the course of ill-disposed and ungodly men. He makes them see how awful goodness is, how strong is gentleness, how omnipotent is love.

Returning good for evil, again *reflects great honour upon Christ*. I do not know of anything which makes the blind world see so much of the glory of Christ as this. When one of the martyrs was being tortured and tormented in a horrible way, the tyrant who had caused his sufferings said to him, "And what has your Christ ever done for you that you should bear this?" He replied, "He has done this for me, that in the midst of all my pain, I do nothing else but pray for you." Ah, Lord Jesus, thou hast taught us how to conquer, for thou hast conquered. There are many mighty names on the battle-roll of earth, but thy name is not there: there is another conflict sterner and nobler, and thou standest at the head of the heroes who are engaged in it. Read the name, my brethren, it is written in his own blood, "Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified, the chief of those who overcome evil with good." Who among you will say, "Write down my name, Sir, beneath my Lord the Lamb, for in that battle I would have a share, and on those lines I would fight the foe"? Recollect *you must* do it or you cannot be like him, and if you are not like him, you have not his spirit, and "if any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

I will not explain how this principle can be carried into other things, for there is no time, but I will close by noticing that *everything that is admirable may be said of this method of overcoming evil with good*. It is so noble, it is so becoming one whom God has lifted up to be his child, that I commend it to every man of sanctified feeling. A Christian man is the noblest work of God, and one of the noblest features of a Christian man is his readiness to forgive and the cheerfulness with which he seeks to recompense good for evil. The Emperor Adrian, before he reached the throne, had been grievously insulted. When he had attained the imperial purple he met the man who had used him ill. The guilty person was, of course, dreadfully afraid of his mighty foe. He knew that now it only needed a wish from the Emperor, and his life would be taken away. Adrian cried out, "Approach. You have nothing to fear; I am an Emperor!" Did this heathen feel that his dignity lifted him above the meanness of revenge? Then, my brethren, let those whom Christ has made kings unto God scorn to render evil for evil. Say, "I am a Christian, and my resentments are over. What can I do to serve you? I could have fought you to the death aforetime, but now I am dead myself and born again, and having commenced a new life, behold Christ hath made all things new. My animosities are buried in his tomb, my revenges are lost in the abyss into which he has cast my sins; and now as a new man in Christ Jesus, my life shall be love, for he hath said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and on the good."

Good for evil is nobly congruous with the spirit of the gospel. Were we not saved because the Lord rendered to us good for evil? The spirit of the law is "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," but the spirit of the gospel is, "freely I forgive you: your many iniquities and vast transgressions are all blotted out for Christ's name's sake, therefore be pitiful towards others." Forgiveness is one fruit of the gospel, and doing good in return for evil is another. Should not the spirit of every

Christian man be one of unconquerable love? For by unconquerable love he is saved.

And, beloved, this spirit of forgiveness is the Spirit of God, and he that hath it becomes like to God. If thou wouldst rise to the highest style of being, rise thou to the condition of a being who can be injured, and yet forgive. To be just is something, scarcely for a righteous man would one die; but to be merciful and kind is much more, since for a good man some would even dare to die—such is the enthusiasm which a loving spirit will kindle. Rise above mere righteousness into the divine atmosphere of love. But whether men love you or not is a small matter; whether you conquer *them* or not is also a little matter, but that you should conquer evil, that you should be victorious over sin, that you should receive from your Lord at the last the “Well done, good and faithful servant,” and that you should be like to God in your nature, this is of the utmost importance to you, for this is heaven. Heaven is to have self dethroned; to be purged of all anger—to be delivered from all pride. Heaven is in fact to be God-like. May we be made so through Jesus Christ our Saviour, by the work of his Holy Spirit. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans xii.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 15TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

"The apostles said unto the Lord, increase our faith."—Luke xvii. 5.

THE sermon of last Sabbath morning, in which I endeavoured earnestly to inculcate the doctrine of overcoming evil with good, and the frank and full forgiveness of all injuries for Christ's sake, has raised much discussion. I know that it startled a great many of you, and that you have held a great many questionings among yourselves as to whether such precepts are practicable by ordinary Christian men. At that I am not at all surprised, because when our Lord preached the same doctrine his disciples were so astonished that the apostles exclaimed in surprise, "Lord, increase our faith." It is most important in this case to see the connection of the text, or you will fail to see its drift and bearings. It was not for the sake of working miracles that the apostles sought increased faith; it was not in order to bear their present or future trials, neither was it to enable them to receive some mysterious article of the faith, but their prayer referred to a common every-day duty enjoined by the gospel, the forgiving those who do us wrong; for the previous verses are to this effect "Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." And it was upon hearing this that the apostles cried, "Increase our faith." If you have been surprised, dear friends, at the high standard of Christian duty which my Lord has laid down for you, I only trust your surprise may drive you to the same resort as it did those first servants of the Lord, and compel you to appeal for help to him who issued the command. Will he not help us in walking in his own ways? When we feel that his commandment is exceeding broad, to whom should we appeal for aid but to him who is our leader in all holy conversation and godliness?

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He will not set you the task and refuse you his assistance in performing it.

Observe that these apostles did not, because of their having sinned against this precept in former times, conclude that they had no faith. They did not conclude because the precept was so much above them that therefore they were unbelievers altogether. Despair is no help to Christian duty ; to doubt our discipleship will not help us to obey our Lord. If any of you have cut yourselves off from the household of faith because you fall short of the noblest forms of Christian love, I entreat you to begin again, and instead of doubting the existence of your faith ask to have it increased. There is a fountain opened for your past uncleanness, and sanctifying power for your future lives ; apply to Jesus at once for the double deliverance, and doubt not that he will deal graciously with you.

Neither did the disciples reject the precept as utterly impossible, nor excuse themselves from it on the ground that in their peculiar circumstances it must needs be modified. They did not complain that it was too much to expect of human nature, nor did they regard the command as only fit for dwellers in Utopia. No, they respected the precept which surprised them and admired the virtue which astonished them. As loyal followers of the Lord Jesus, they felt bound to follow where he led the way, for they believed that he was too wise to issue an impossible command, too good to teach an impracticable code of morals, and too honest to set up a standard to which no mortal could in any measure attain. They looked on his command and they felt such confidence in him that instead of drawing back they resolved that it should be obeyed at all cost. Their resolve was to do his bidding, but feeling that they could not achieve it in their own strength they began to pray, and their prayer was for faith. They felt that only faith could work such a wonder of patient love ; it was far out of the ordinary line of action ; flesh and blood could not accomplish it, mere resolve would not achieve it, faith must do it, and even faith itself would need strengthening or it would fail in the attempt. They felt also that the kind of faith which could forgive to seventy times seven must be supernatural, and not such as they could grow in their own breasts without divine assistance, and therefore they said to the Lord, " Increase our faith." They needed such faith as he could give, in order that they might perform such duties as he enjoined. Beloved, imitate the example of these apostles : whenever you feel that you have something to do that is beyond you, stop a moment and breathe a prayer for more strength. If ever the leap is too wide, draw back, take breath, ask strength, and then, in the name of him that will surely bear you over it, take your leap and succeed. He has not brought you into a condition in which you shall feel your infirmities so abjectly as to lie down and die, but he does intend you to feel your weakness so much that you may importunately pray for his aid, and then in the strength which you have gained by prayer may attain to heights of virtue which else had been far above and out of your sight. We are all the more likely to rise to holiness when we have seen our own incapacity for it. Those who at the first blush were somewhat staggered by the high and glorious precepts of Christian forgiveness, of non-resistance, and of returning good for evil, are none the less likely to become good practisers of

this holy art, but all the more so if their astonishment drives them to pray, "Lord, increase our faith."

Let us then, this morning, in that connection, *consider the prayer of the text*; let us, secondly, *see how it bears upon the duty of forgiveness*, how the increase of faith can help us to forgive; and then, thirdly, let us *note how our Lord Jesus answered this prayer*. O divine Spirit, lead us into these truths while we meditate together, and afterwards help us to show in our lives the mind of Christ.

I. First, LET US CONSIDER THE PRAYER ITSELF. It may help us to see its meaning if we for a moment consider *where the apostles learned to pray like this*. Who suggested to them to say, "Lord, increase our faith"? Now, faith is the act of man: truly, it is the gift of God, but it is as surely the act of man. God does not believe for us, the Holy Spirit does not believe in our stead—the man himself believes. This would be clear enough to the apostles, but they might not so readily learn that Jesus had power to give and to increase faith. It is assuredly most proper to ask the Lord to increase our faith, but it was not very early in their Christian career that the apostles did so pray; in fact, it is a very singular fact that I think this is almost the only instance in which, as an apostolic company, they asked any spiritual thing of the Master. They did say, "Lord, teach us how to pray," but I am afraid they meant to learn a form of prayer rather than to be filled with the spirit of prayer. As to spiritual blessings, our Lord might well say to them, "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name." But they were at last so overwhelmed with a consciousness of their own weakness when they perceived the exceeding breadth and height of the law of Christian forgiveness, that they felt assured that there must be strength laid up for them somewhere or other, and where could it be but in their Lord, and so they prayed to the Lord, "increase our faith." It is not the only time in which a sense of their own personal emptiness has convinced men of the divine fulness, and driven them to it.

I think it was Jesus who had taught them so to pray. They must have caught the idea from that which is recorded in the eleventh of Mark, at the twenty-second verse, where you have much the same passage as the one before us, though expressed in different words. "Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Note that our Lord according to Mark commenced this exhortation concerning forgiveness by saying, "Have faith in God"; then showed the power of faith in working wonders, and especially in obtaining answers to prayer, and last of all commanded forgiveness of trespasses. Was not that sentence "Have faith in God" the mother of their prayer "Increase our faith"? Jesus had said "Have faith," and now when they fully understand what it is that

he inculcates they take the word out of his mouth, and they say to their Lord, "add to our faith. We trust we have some of that precious grace, but add to it yet more and more, we beseech thee." Our Master in his teaching was continually connecting the forgiveness of others with the exercise of faith. In the passage just referred to, and in that which surrounds my text, you have our Lord referring to the faith which moves mountains, or plucks up sycamore trees by the roots, and coupling with it the forgiving of offences. Surely this may have led them so to pray.

Our Lord had also suggested this prayer for faith from the fact that as he had taught them that there must be faith in prayer, so he had also insisted upon it that prayer must always be connected with a forgiving spirit: in fact, in the model prayer, according to which we are always to shape our petitions, he has taught us to say, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," or, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." He has allowed us, as it were, to cut out for ourselves the measure of pardon that we wish to receive, and the measure is to be precisely that which we are prepared to give to others. God will pardon us in proportion as we are prepared to pardon. If you have a trespass which you cannot pardon, God also has an unpardonable sin written in his book against you: unpardonable, I mean, as long as you are unforgiving. If you will only pardon slowly, and after a niggardly fashion, you shall not for many a day enjoy the freeness and the bounty of the unlimited mercy of God. So you see as our Lord had connected success in prayer both with forgiveness and faith, he had suggested the increase of the one with the view of accomplishing the other. No man can pray successfully while he is in an unforgiving frame of mind, but a believing man always does pray successfully, therefore a believing man is ready to forgive. As faith increases we become more able to overlook the provocations we endure.

Do you know I think that the apostles had also learned this prayer, not only from the Master, but from one who was very much inferior to themselves, but who nevertheless had outrun them in the knowledge of the struggles of the heart,—I mean the father who had a lunatic child. That was a wonderful prayer of his, when Jesus said to him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The poor man cried out, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." This was a deeply experimental prayer. It showed how familiar he was to the workings of his own soul. He detected unbelief in his own heart, and yet he saw faith there too; whereas a great many Christians, if they discern some unbelief in their hearts, straightway imagine that there cannot be any faith, and if they possess a degree of faith, they fancy that there cannot be any unbelief surviving, whereas the two powers are in one man at the same time, and contend within his soul. The apostles appear to me to have learned a noble lesson from that tried father, and now they put his prayer into their own language, and use it on their own account. They do as good as confess their lingering unbelief, and yet they acknowledge that they do believe while they pray, "Lord, increase our faith." So what with the teaching of Jesus, and what with the example of that poor struggling soul, they had been taught to pray as they should. It is a grand thing when every day we

learn to pray better, and both from the Master's lips and from the experience of all, his servants are being taught what to pray for as we ought. By the use of such means the Spirit helpeth our infirmity, and teaches us how to prevail with God.

Now let us come a little closer to prayer itself, and notice *what it confesses*. It confesses that they had faith, for they say, "Lord, increase our faith." He who asks for faith must have some faith, or he would not ask at all; indeed, it is with faith that we ask for faith. He who pleads, "Add to my faith," owns that he has some already, to which more is to be added. So that these apostles, notwithstanding that they were staggered by the duty before them, believed that Christ could help them through it, and believed also that he could at once give them the needful faith. When you ask for any blessing, always do so in such a way as to acknowledge what you have already received. Do not despise the little faith you have even though you feel bound to plead for more. They also confessed that while they had faith they had not enough of it. My brothers and sisters, must we not all make the same confession? Thou dost believe in Jesus Christ to the salvation of thy soul, but, brother, dost thou believe to the comfort of thy heart? Thou hast faith enough to bear the ordinary trials of life, but, dear brother, hast thou enough for the superior contests to which thou hast lately been called? If thou hast not, then here is the prayer for thee, "Lord, increase my faith." Certain it is that no one among us has too much faith, nor even enough should unusual storms arise. We have no faith to spare. God grants it to us always according to our day, and he giveth more grace and faith when he sendeth more trial. Often, when our faith is sorely tried, we are compelled to feel mere babes in faith's school, and need indeed to pray daily, "Lord, increase our faith."

But then by their prayer the apostles confessed that they could not increase their own faith. Faith is not a weed to grow upon every dunghill, without care or culture: it is a plant of heavenly growth, and requires divine watching and watering. He who is the author of faith and the finisher of it, is the only one who can increase it. As no man ever obtains his first faith apart from the Spirit of God, so no man ever getteth more faith except through the working of that selfsame divine power. The Spirit which rests upon Jesus must anoint us also, or the measure of faith will not be enlarged. Breathe then the prayer to God, my brother, "Increase my faith:" this will be a far wiser course than to resolve in your own strength, "I will believe more," for, perhaps, in rebuke of your pride you will fall into a decaying state, and even believe less. After having made so vainglorious a resolution, you may fall into grievous despondency: do not therefore say, "I will accumulate more faith," but pray "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Herein is your wisdom.

The prayer also confesses that the Lord Jesus can increase faith. Dear brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ can increase your faith by the use of common means, through his Spirit. He is able to make all grace abound towards you. Not by any magical mode, nor by miracle, but even by such things as ye have, the Lord can make Little-faith grow into Greatheart, and turn Feeble-mind into Valiant-for-truth. He has

the key of faith, and can open more of its chambers, and fill them with his treasures. He can reveal truth to you which shall cause you to believe more fully, or the truth already revealed he can set in clearer light and apply more powerfully to your heart, and so can add to your faith. Do not believe, brother, that you are condemned to lead an unbelieving life. No such necessity exists. Let no man among you sit down and say, "I have a withered arm of faith, and cannot stretch it out, or I have a weak eye, and shall never be able to see afar off." No, the name of our God is Jehovah Rophi, and he can heal us of all our ills. God can make thee strong, brother. Dost thou not know that he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Present again and again the prayer "Lord increase our faith," with the full conviction that he can do so to any extent, and that he can lift even the most drooping soul among us into the full assurance of faith. May the Lord at this very hour work in you a childlike confidence in his love and faithfulness, and never may you be the victim of mistrust again.

I want you to observe *who prayed this prayer*. It is not often that the evangelists speak of "the apostles," separately, as asking anything. You will perceive in the first verse that our Lord spoke to the disciples. "Then said he to the disciples," but the persons who sought increased faith were the *apostles*. "The apostles said." How is this? Does it not show us that these men who were the leaders of the Christian church did not think themselves infallible? Fancy the successor of Peter saying, "Lord, increase our faith!" Surely, his Holiness wants no increase of faith! He who boasts that he is infallible cannot be unbelieving. Ah, brethren, the apostles knew nothing of such silly and wicked pretensions, none of them ever in their lives pretending to be the "Head of the Church" and "Vicar of Christ"; but they were ready to cry to their Master for increase of faith, just as soon as the rest of the disciples, ay, sooner too, because they were the first to feel their need. They were the choice of the Lord's flock, and therefore they were the first to see and to confess their own failures. No man so soon knows and so much deplores his want of faith as the man who has most of it. It was not the little ones in the church who said, "increase our faith,"—they might well say it; but it was the masters in Israel who had been best instructed by Christ, who had seen his miracles and preached his word; these were the very ones who cried to their Lord, "Increase our faith." The nearer you live to God, and the more full your soul is of faith, the less inclined will you be to be self-satisfied; and the more earnestly will you desire that your faith should be increased.

It is somewhat remarkable that the whole of the apostles thus prayed. They were unanimous in this prayer, though it did not often happen that they were so in anything. There were divisions among them, and strifes as to who among them should be the greatest: but this time they were all one in the petition to the Lord. A petition which commended itself to the entire college of the apostles is one which surely all of us may put up to our great Lord in the presence of that supreme duty, of which we heard last Sabbath morning. In order that we may not resist evil, but overcome evil with good, be pleased, O Lord, to increase our faith.

While I am still explaining the prayer, let us notice once again *why they asked for faith*. They said unto the Lord, "increase our faith." Might they not more fitly have said, "Lord, increase our meekness, Lord, increase our Christian love." Nay, but they went to the bottom of the thing, they looked to the mainspring of all Christian graces, they asked for faith. Sometimes, brethren, we are led to see that if a duty is to be performed at all it cannot be done in the strength of nature. Now the grace which deals with the supernatural is faith, hence we say, "Lord, increase our faith, for since this is a supernatural virtue which thou dost ask of us, be pleased to give us the faculty which deals with supernatural power that we may be enabled to achieve this high and difficult duty." I know some of you think that faith was given to men of old, that they might work miracles, and you have admired the faith of Samson when he slew the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, the faith which "quenched the violence of fire," the faith which "stopped the mouths of lions," and so on. Yes, but faith is meant for other matters besides miracles. The faith which enables a Christian man to live a holy life, especially the faith that will enable you not to be overcome of evil but to overcome evil with good, and to forgive your neighbour to seventy times seven is as great a faith as that which of old stopped the sun and divided the sea. It seems to be thought by some that faith now-a-days is only meant to raise money with, that we may support orphanages and colleges by obtaining answers to prayer. Well, these are noble deeds, and the faith which accomplishes them brings great glory to God. God give to his servants who are called to such work more and more success, for such works are a standing testimony to a sceptical world that God does hear prayer: but after all the feats which the most of you are to perform are neither miracles nor the maintenance of orphanages, but deeds of love in common life. You have not to stop the mouths of lions, but you have the equally difficult task of stopping your own mouth when you are in an angry temper; you are not called to quench the violence of fire, except as it burns in your own wrath; you have to smite no Philistine but your own sins, and cast down no walls but your own prejudices. Christian woman, your faith has to work its miracles in the drawing-room, in the parlour, in the kitchen, in the chamber. Man of business, your faith is to perform its marvels on the exchange, or in the shop, or in the commercial room. Working man, you are to achieve your wonders at the forge, or by the bench, or in the field, or in the mill. Here is your sphere of service, and you have need to lift to heaven the prayer of the apostles—"Lord, increase our faith." that you may live worthily, righteously, soberly, and after a Christian sort.

II. Secondly, I want to show HOW THE INCREASE OF FAITH BEARS UPON OUR POWER TO FORGIVE OTHERS. And I would answer first, that *I think you already see that it does so*, although you cannot explain the mode of its operation. If I were to bring before you a person of whom I might say, this man is strong in faith, you would feel certain that he would be a man who would readily forgive the injuries of others. Though you do not see the connection between the two, you are very conscious that there must be such a connection. Now, when I tell you of Abraham, how when the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot quarrelled,

Abraham did not quarrel with Lot, but, finding that they must separate, gave Lot, his junior, the choice as to which way he would go. It seems natural that Abraham should act in that gentle manner. That calm quiet believing man of God—you have only to look into his majestic face and feel quite certain that he will act with great gentleness and nobleness of soul. Joseph, the man so full of faith that he gave commandment concerning his bones,—when his brothers came before him and he made himself known to them, and wept over them and forgave them,—you feel that such conduct is just what you might expect from Joseph: the very fact that he was so true a believer in God makes you feel that he will not seek to avenge himself, though he had been shamefully treated by his unbrotherly brethren. Moses was so meek, so gentle, that you trace his meekness at once to his faith. And David, when you see him standing over sleeping Saul, and hear his companion say, “Let me smite him but this once;” when he will not allow the deed to be done, but leaves his enemy in the hands of God, you say to yourself, “I expected such conduct of David, for he is a truly believing man of God.” Though you have not satisfactorily traced out the connection between the two, yet you know very well that if a man professes to be a believer in Christ you expect him to be gentle and forgiving; and you are right. But there is an actual connection between the two, which we shall, I doubt not, see directly.

When the apostles said “Lord, increase our faith,” they meant, “*Increase our confidence in thee*,” and this is a very material help towards the performance of the duty. First, God must help us so to believe in Jesus that we may not suspect him of setting us an impracticable task. The Lord has said, “Overcome evil with good,” and has bidden us “Forgive seventy times seven”: do you not feel ready to say, “This is a hard saying, who can bear it”? Do we not fancy that we shall never get through the world in that gentle fashion? It is our unbelief which tells us that we must sometimes bend our fists, or at least sometimes deliver our minds with great vigour of wrath, or else we shall be trodden down like mire in the streets. We need to ask for grace that we may be helped to believe that Christ’s way of forgiveness is after all the best way, the noblest way, the most truly manly and the most surely happy way.

Their prayer may be read as meaning “Lord, help us to believe that thou canst enable us to do this.” We cannot by our own unaided nature be always forgiving, lowly, gentle and loving in temper, but thou hast said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Therefore, O Lord, give us more faith in thee that we may believe that thou canst make us meek and lowly, even as thou art. We ought to believe that Jesus can turn our lion-like tempers into lambs, and our raven-like spirits into doves, and if we have not faith enough for that we must pray for it; for do you not see that if a man believes a duty to be impossible, or judges that grace itself cannot enable him to do it, then he never will do it; but when he obtains a confidence that the command is within his power, or that it can be obeyed by a force which is within his reach, then he has won half the battle already. In believing in the possibility of a high standard of holiness, a man is already on his way

towards that holiness. I therefore earnestly exhort you to ask for more faith, that you may believe the duty of constant forgiveness to be possible of accomplishment through divine grace.

But, next, *between faith and forgiveness a very close connection will be seen if we enquire what is the foundation of faith?* Listen a moment. Faith believes that God for Christ's sake forgives us,—and how much? Seventy times seven? Beloved, God forgives us much more than that. And does the Lord forgive us seven times a day? If seven times a day we offend him and repent, does he forgive? Ay, that he does. This is to be unfeignedly believed, and I do believe it: I believe that, often as I transgress, God is more ready to forgive me than I am ready to offend, though, alas, I am all too ready to transgress. Hast thou right thoughts of God, dear hearer? If so, then thou knowest that he is a tender father, willing to wipe the tear of penitence away, and press his offending child to his bosom, and kiss him with the kisses of his forgiving love. The mercy of God lies at the very foundation of our faith; and surely it wonderfully helps us to forgive. Dost not thou see at once, O forgiven one, that the natural inference is that if the Lord hath forgiven thee thy ten thousand talents of debt, thou dardest not go and take thy brother by the throat for the hundred pence which he owes to thee, but thou must forgive him because God for Christ's sake has forgiven thee?

Notice again, that *the joy of faith is a wonderful help to forgiveness.* Do you recollect when you were first converted? I do remember well the first day in which I believed in Jesus Christ: do you not also remember your own spiritual birthday? Recall then the love of your espousals, the happy honeymoon of your spiritual life. Could you forgive your enemy then? Why, you thought nothing of injuries: you were so happy and joyful in the Lord that if anybody tried to irritate you they could not do it, or if you became a little annoyed for a minute, you soon came back to your moorings again. You were too full of holy joy to indulge in quarrelling. Dear brother, do you not know that you ought always to have retained that love and joy, and that the best thing you can do is to get them back if you have lost them! Therefore, pray to-day, "Lord, increase my faith, restore unto me once again the joy of thy salvation." When you return from your backsliding and rejoice in the Lord with all your heart, you will find it easy enough to forgive your direst foe.

Again, it is quite certain that *a spirit of rest is created by faith, which greatly aids the gentle spirit.* The man who believes enters into rest and becomes calm of spirit, and this keeps him from seeking petty revenges. He knows that whatever happens all is right for ever; he knows whom he has believed, and he walks in the integrity of his heart, and therefore he is not a man that is likely to be irritated. It is wonderful when you are sure you are right what a deal you can put up with. Good Joseph Hughes, of Battersea, was one of the founders of the Bible Society, and one of the most earnest workers for it. He was riding on a coach upon a dreadfully cold, bitter winter's day, and at his side sat a talkative person, who thought himself a gentleman. As the coach proceeded he began talking about religion in general, and denouncing Bible Societies in particular. With a sprinkling of swearing

he went on to say that such societies were got up to keep lazy secretaries, and other officials. "Those fellows," he said, "get fine salaries, and then they go travelling all about the country, enjoying themselves, and charging a pretty penny for their travelling expenses. I understand they always travel in the best style." Mr. Hughes quietly replied, "But what would you say, sir, if you were informed by one of the secretaries that he never received a farthing for his services; and that in order to save money to the Society he rode on the top of the coach on a cold day like this so that he might not pay so much as he would have to do if he went inside?" "Now, sir," said he, "one of them is doing this before your eyes." Now you can understand how Mr. Hughes could be very cool, and allow the talkative man to proceed as long as he liked with his falsehoods, because he knew he had so crushing an answer for him; and so when faith gives perfect rest to the soul a man is not easily disturbed, for he knows that behind all there is a blessing which will compensate for present annoyances. Conscious strength removes us from the temptations which surround petty feebleness. May God give you that increased faith which shall fix your heart in the sphere of perfect satisfaction in the Lord and patient waiting for his will, so shall you cease to fret yourself because of evil doers.

Again, *faith when it is strong has a high expectancy about it, which helps it to bear with the assaults of men of the world.* "What," saith she,—*"what mattereth that which happens to me here, for I am on my journey, and I shall soon be in the glory-land, where I shall have a reward for all my travail by being for ever with the Lord."* A man readily puts up with the little inconvenience of the present when he has great joys in store for the future. If you stay at an inn for a while when you are on a journey, it is only for a night, and though things may not be very comfortable, you say, "Well, I am not going to live here a week, I shall be gone in the morning: it does not matter, I am looking forward to my sweet home at my journey's end." So doth faith, by its blessed expectation of the future, make the troubles of the present to be very light, so that she bears them without fretfulness and anger. May the Holy Spirit cause faith thus to work in us.

III. But my time has gone sooner than I desired, and therefore I must close by noticing in the third place HOW THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ANSWERED THE PRAYER FOR INCREASED FAITH. He did it in two ways.

First, *by assuring them that faith can do anything.* The Lord said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, be thou plucked up by the root and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you." I think he meant that to be understood as a proverbial expression, to signify that faith can accomplish anything. You say, "Ah, my bad temper is rooted in me: as a sycamore tree takes hold of the earth by its roots, so an ill temper has gone into the very depth of my nature. I am constitutionally quick tempered. From my very birth I have found it hard to forgive." If thou have faith, my brother, thou canst say to that sycamore tree, or better still, upas tree within thee, "Be thou plucked up by the roots." But, saith one, "With such a nature as mine, such a changeable, excitable, nervous disposition as mine, you cannot expect to plant in me the tree which bears the fruit

of calm, quiet forgiveness." What says our Lord? "Ye shall say to that sycamore tree, be thou planted in the sea." A strange place for a tree to be planted! In the sea! Indeed, it is an impossible thing, because every wave would shake its roots out of their places; the substance is too unsubstantial, the liquid of the sea is too moveable for a single tree to grow therein. Our Lord says, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed it should obey you." You can by faith plant a tree in the sea, and so can you plant this fruit-bearing glorious tree of love to God and love to man within your frail nature, if you have but faith enough. Brethren, we do not want to be moving mountains. If mountains required moving, I have no doubt faith would move them, but the mountains are in the best possible places they can be, and therefore why should we uproot them? We do not require to transplant sycamore trees by faith, for there are plenty of workmen to be had to lift them up, and carry them carefully to another place, and it would be a pity that we should use faith so as to deprive poor men of their means of livelihood; but I doubt not it would be done if it were necessary. Now, there is room enough in the moral and spiritual world for faith, and there she can work her miracles. We can say to our bad disposition, be plucked up by the roots, and it will be done; and if we have faith in God we can have the right disposition, the quiet, calm spirit implanted in us. Dost thou believe this? If thou dost not, then thou hast not the faith, and thou shalt not see it, but, if thou believest, it is possible to thee.

Once more, how did Christ answer the prayer? He answered it in a very remarkable manner, as I think, *by teaching them humility*. He said to them in effect, "You think that if you were to forgive to seventy times seven you would be doing a great deal. You fancy that if you were never to return evil for evil, but always to be gentle and loving, you would be somebody, and that God would almost be in debt to you;" but it is not so. And then he went on to tell them that the servant, when he is sent to plough or to attend to the cattle is not thanked. While he is doing his labour his master does not come to him and wonder at him as if he were doing some very extraordinary thing. The master does not hold up his hands in amazement and cry, "How well my servant can plough, how cleverly he foddens the oxen," and he does not go to him and say, "My dear, invaluable servant, I am sure I do not know what I could do without you, therefore come and sit down, and I will wait upon you." Oh, no, if he works well he only does his own work and nobody else's; he does what he is bound to do, and the master does not think of praising him, and feasting him. So says Christ, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." This mode of increasing our faith reminds me of the hydropathic way of strengthening some people by pouring a douche of cold water upon the spine of their backs. The parable of the servant and his lord shows us our true place, and the small value which we may attach to our own services. It takes the man who thinks, "Oh, it is a great thing to forgive everybody, and if I were to do it I should be a great saint," and it pours a torrent of cold water upon his pride, by saying, "No, if

you did it you would not be anything wonderful then, it is only what is your duty to do, you would have no reason to go about the world blowing your trumpet, and saying, 'What a wonderful martyr I am,' you would only then have fulfilled a common duty." Well now, it seems to me that this is a wonderful strengthener to my faith. I feel resolved within my spirit thus—my Lord and Master, I will no more say of anything thou biddest me to do, "this is beyond my reach," but I will pray, "My Lord, increase my faith till I can do it, till I can live up to thy standard; for even if I should do so by thy grace, yet considering what thou hast done for me, considering what I owe to thee, considering the power of thy blessed Spirit that dwells within me, considering the richness of the ultimate reward which thou wilt surely give me, though it be of grace and not of debt, all I could do, if I could be zealous as a seraph, and perfect as the saints in heaven, would be too little, and I should have to confess that I am an unprofitable servant, I should have done no more than it was my duty to have done."

I pray God the Holy Spirit to let this sermon come on the back of the discourse of last Sabbath day, that you may not look upon the first as being impracticable, but may gather strength from the second to go and put into practice what you have learned. May God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xviii.

19—35; Luke xvii. 1—10.

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THE SINNER'S SAVIOUR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 1ST, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner."—Luke xix. 7.

PUBLICANS or tax-gatherers among the Jews were objects of intense aversion. The nation was always restless under the Roman yoke, for the Israelite's pride of lineage made him boast that he was born free and was never in bondage unto any man. Moreover, they had hopes of a great future under a Messiah who would lead them on to conquest; and therefore the Roman yoke galled their shoulders exceedingly, and the payment of taxes to a foreign power was a heavy grievance. That the people of God should pay tribute to a heathen power was a bone of continual contention; and the persons of the tax-gatherers were had in bitter hatred. While they abhorred the collectors of customs as a class, they reserved their most intense contempt for any of their own countrymen who lent themselves to this obnoxious business. They regarded such as almost abjuring their relationship to Israel, and sharing the guilt of the oppressor. As a usual rule it would only be the lowest class of people among the Jews who would become collectors of tribute from their own countrymen. The outcasts and scapegraces of society would sometimes take to this detested business, but very rarely would a man of wealth and position, such as Zacchæus evidently was, encounter the scorn which such an office brought upon him. Zacchæus was not, perhaps, the actual tax collector who called upon individuals, but he was the superintendent of the custom-house officers of the district, for "he was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich." He came, perhaps, under even greater odium than others, because he occupied a more prominent position and carried on the unsavoury business on a larger scale.

Jewish society drew a cordon around the *publicans*, and set them aside as moral lepers, with whom respectable people must not associate if they studied their souls' health; and so Zacchæus, with all his

wealth, was regarded as a pariah by his fellow-countrymen. He may have been a thoroughly honest and upright man, but that mattered little to those who had taken a prejudice against all publicans: he was regarded by the Pharisaic party as one of the outcasts of society, a man not to be acknowledged in the street, and into whose house no one would enter, a man to be shunned if he had the impertinence to enter the synagogue or the temple, and only to be tolerated because it was not possible to rid the world of him. From the very first our Lord had broken through this hard and fast rule. He disregarded all the traditional and fashionable rules of caste. Constantly did he address publicans as if they had the same feelings as other men, and talked with them, and went into their houses, so that he came to be commonly called by those who wished to show their contempt of him, "the friend of publicans and sinners." A man who could be a friend to publicans was reckoned to be as evil as publicans themselves, and further a man could not go; for if the Jew mentioned publicans and sinners, he always gave publicans the first place, as being decidedly the worse of the two. "Friend of publicans and sinners," who can tell what a mass of contempt was condensed into that title! Our Lord did not at all deviate from his course because of this scoffing, but he went on befriending sinners, even open sinners, sinners of the most avowed and undoubted degree of sin. He almost commenced his ministry by talking to an unchaste woman at the well of Sychar, and he finished it by dispensing pardon to a thief while he was hanging on the cross: and between that calling of the woman of Samaria who had had five husbands, and was living unlawfully at the time, right along to the thief who died upon the gallows-tree for his crime, the Saviour had been receiving sinners and eating with them. He had been seeking and saving that which was lost.

The old contempt of the sinner's Saviour lingers in the world still among the self-righteous: taking different shapes and speaking with other voices, it is still among us, and still in one way or other the old charge is repeated, that Christianity is too lenient to the sinner, that it tends to discourage the naturally amiable and virtuous, and looks too favourably upon the vicious and disreputable; that it is always talking about pardon without merit, and speaking slightly of human goodness; and therefore some even say that they regard it as a foe to society and an enemy to good morals. How easily could we turn the tables upon these slanderers, for usually those who talk thus have but a scanty supply of morals and virtues themselves.

First, brethren, it was said that Jesus had gone to be guest to a man that was a sinner, and we shall *admit the truth of the charge*; secondly, we shall *deny the insinuation which that charge is meant to cover*; and thirdly, *we shall rejoice in the fact which has been the subject of objection.*

I. First, then, we shall ADMIT THE TRUTH OF THE CHARGE. We do so most cheerfully, and without the slightest reserve. Jesus did go to be guest to a man that was a sinner, and did so not only once, but as often as he saw need. He went after the sheep which had gone astray, and he had a wonderful attraction for the disreputable classes, for it is written, "Then drew near unto him all the publicans sinners for to hear him." His ministry was aimed at those

who were as sheep without a shepherd, and it succeeded among such, for we read that the publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom. We are not going for a single moment to deny what is so evidently true : Jesus was and is the sinner's friend. We admit most fully and freely that the gospel which now represents Christ upon earth bears the most kindly relationship towards the guilty, that in fact it contemplates their salvation, and finds its greatest triumphs amongst them.

To begin with : *the object of Christ and the design of the gospel is the saving of sinners.* If there be any man in this world who is not guilty, the Saviour is nothing to him. If there be any one who has never transgressed God's law, but has kept his commandments from his youth up, and is excellent and meritorious in himself, Jesus Christ did not come into the world to call such a man to repentance. Why should he ? "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." Christ comes not to proffer his needless services to those who are not sick or needy ! A Saviour for those who are not lost ! A redeemer for those who are not enslaved ! Alms for the rich ! Medicine for the whole ! Pardon for the innocent ! These are all needless things. A physician does not at all hesitate to say that he comes into a town with his eye upon the sick ; it would be ridiculous for him to come there with a view to anybody else ; and so to guilty sinners Jesus comes. Gospel promises are addressed to the guilty. Who else would need abundant pardon ? Gospel invitations are addressed to the sinful. Who should be entreated to wash but those who are foul ? Gospel blessings are intended for those who have transgressed and are under condemnation, for who else would value forgiveness and justification ? I know myself of no gospel for men who have not sinned. I know of no New Testament promises intended for those who have never broken the law ; but I perceive all through the wondrous pages of the gospel that mercy's eye and heart are set upon those who are guilty and self-condemned. The Eternal Watcher is looking over the vast ocean of life, not that he may spy out the vessels which sail along proudly in safety, but that he may see those who are almost wrecks. "He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profiteth me not ; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." Our Lord was more moved at the sight of sickness than of health, and wrought his greatest wonders among fevers, leprosies, and palsies. This is the end and object of the gospel, namely, to save the unrighteous ; the God of the gospel is he that "justifieth the ungodly," "for when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

As the gospel's eye is thus fixed on sinners, we have to notice that *our Lord does actually call sinners into its fellowship.* Zacchæus did not come to Jesus first, but Jesus went after him while he was yet a sinner, and said to him, "To-day I must abide in thy house." So does the gospel, by the Holy Spirit's power, continually call to itself the guilty. The drunkard, the thief, the harlot, the profane, the careless, the prayerless are called out : those who are consciously guilty are led to faith and pardon. Not merely those guilty of open sin, but those guilty of secret sin, sins of the heart, sins of the imagination, sins which stain the

inmost soul, are converted and saved. Jesus Christ causes his ministers, in the preaching of the word, to gather out of the world and into the church those who were enemies and alienated in their minds by wicked works. The Spirit of God does not effectually call those who are without sin, but he calls sinners to repentance. The Spirit of God does not quicken those living, living in their own natural goodness; but he quickens the dead in trespasses and sins. The eternal love of God does not go forth towards those who dream of their own superiority and wrap themselves up in the mantle of their own righteousness, but it goeth forth unto those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron, because they have rebelled against the Lord and contemned the counsel of the Most High. These are they upon whom this mighty love fixes itself, and upon whom sovereign grace exerts its power. The great founder of Zion has found inhabitants for her, even as Romulus peopled Rome. It is said of that renowned builder that when he walled his city he peopled it by permitting the offscouring of all other cities to use it as a refuge. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O Zion, city of God, and yet all thy citizens confess that they were guilty and defiled till Jesus washed and renewed them. To-day Jesus, the Son of David, enlists under his banner men who are in debt, and are discontented, and out of such as are these he makes heroes of the cross. Fain would I invite to the cave Adullam of his church those who are willing to enlist under the banner of the Son of David.

Moreover, while we are about it we will make a further confession; *the man Christ Jesus does very readily come to be guest with a man who is a sinner, for he stands on no ceremony with sinners*, but makes himself at home with them at once. If a Pharisee had gone to Zacchæus' house and been allowed to do exactly what he liked he would have said, "Well, I may perhaps condescend to enter your profane abode, Zacchæus, but I must wash first, and wash afterwards also; and, moreover, you also must wash, and also have your house specially purified—it must be whitewashed, scrubbed, and perfumed with incense; and then, if you will take a seat up in the far corner of the room I do not mind coming near the door, where the fresh air may perhaps remove any exhalations from your guilty person, for I being so transcendantly holy am exceedingly sensitive, and cannot come into contact with your unholiness." Now, the Lord Jesus Christ did not ask Zacchæus even to wash his little finger, but he said, "Make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide in thy house." Why, Zacchæus had the green of the tree all over him, he was not in a very elegant condition to receive the Lord; and worse still, there was his sin about him, and yet Jesus Christ said to him before he had brushed off a grain of dust, "Make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide in thy house." To his house Jesus came, and with him he sojourned, and all without ceremony and preparation. Yes, I have known the Lord Jesus meet with a man as black as hell and wash him white in five minutes, and sit at his side and eat bread with him at once. I have known him meet with the very vilest of offenders, and almost in the twinkling of an eye he has made the transgressor to be his companion and his friend. Did not the father in the parable at once receive his returning son? How many minutes did he wait before he kissed him? How many times did the prodigal wash

his face before his father pressed him to his bosom? He did not even tell him to wash his hands, though he had been feeding swine, but fell upon his neck and kissed him there and then. Our Lord Jesus not only has pity upon sinners, but treats them with love, comes under their roof, and brings salvation to their homes. We confess the impeachment, and rejoice that our Lord is indifferent to the censures of the proud, and continues still to provoke the question, "Why cateth your Master with publicans and sinners?"

Our Lord goes further, he not only stands on no ceremony with sinners, but *within a very little time he is using those very sinners* who had been so unfit for any holy service—using them in his most hallowed work. Note how he makes Zacchæus to be his host: "To-day I must abide in thy house." Was not this going too far? Might we not have prudently suggested, Good Master, forgive Zacchæus, but do it privately! Good Master, accept Zacchæus as a secret disciple, but do not publicly go into such society. To sit at his table, and let him wait upon thee, is too great an honour for the like of him: and surely, brethren, it seemed to the first Christians to be almost impossible that Saul of Tarsus could be allowed to be a preacher. They heard that he now preached the faith which he had persecuted, but they could hardly believe in his apostleship. What, when his hands were just now blood-red with putting saints to death, is he to stand up and preach, and to be an apostle—how can it be! We all have a measure of this legal hardness, and are scarcely prepared to allow the guilty to become heralds of grace too soon after their conversion. The gospel knows nothing of a purgatory at the church doors, or a quarantine before its pulpit: only be it, indeed, seen that a man has really accepted Christ, and we may both receive him into fellowship and employ him in holy service. Jesus permits the man who was a sinner to become his host, even as he allowed the woman who was a sinner to anoint his head, and Peter, who had denied him, to feed his sheep.

Ay, and the Lord favoured Zacchæus, the sinner, by *granting him that day the full assurance of salvation*. The very day that he called him by his grace he gave him full assurance,—at any rate I should not want any better assurance than Zacchæus received when the Lord himself said to him, "This day is salvation come to thy house."

"Oh, might I hear thine heavenly tongue
But whisper '*Thou art mine*!'
Those gentle words should raise my song
To notes almost divine."

How often have we sung this wish, but Zacchæus had it granted him, for the Lord said plainly, "Salvation has come to thy house," and Zacchæus could not doubt it. How happy he must have felt, how free from all trouble—"I am a saved man, and salvation having once entered the house there is no telling where it will go—it will be upstairs, downstairs, among the servants, among the children; it will embrace all my descendants, and I and my house shall be saved." He obtained that choice blessing within the first day of his believing on Christ: and is it not wonderful, poor sinner, that though you even now have not believed in Jesus as yet, and are sitting down in sorrow,

burdened with sin, yet if thou now believest, before this service shall be over, thou mayest not only be saved but know it, and shalt go home and say to thy wife and children, "Salvation has come to our house!"

Blessed be the name of Jesus, all this is true, and we have no wish to conceal it, he has gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

II. Secondly, we are going to DENY THE INSINUATION WHICH IS COVERTLY INTENDED BY THE CHARGE brought against our Lord. Jesus is the friend of sinners, but he is not the friend of sin. Jesus does forgive sin altogether apart from human merit; but Jesus does not therefore treat virtue and vice as if they were indifferent things, or in any way discourage purity and righteousness. Far from it.

For, first, Christ was guest with a man that was a sinner, but *he never flattered a sinner yet*. Direct me to a single passage in his word in which he ever justifies a sinner in sinning, or ever treats sin as if it were a trifle, or looks at it as a mere misfortune and not as a crime. No religion under heaven is so strong in its denunciation of sin as the religion of Jesus Christ: his words do not only condemn acts of sin, but even words and thoughts, in such words as these—"For every idle word that man shall speak he shall give an account in the day of judgment." "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." The Saviour's lips were too truthful, and too pure to pander to the vices of men, he denounced sin in every form and shape, and threatened it with everlasting fire. You do not find Jesus Christ anywhere asserting that the result of sin is a merely temporal evil, that the souls of sinners will be annihilated, or that they will by-and-by in another state obtain forgiveness and be delivered; but "these shall go away into everlasting punishment" rolls like thunder from his honest lips. He sweeps away from men all their empty confidences wherein they entrenched themselves, and makes them see that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He who lives in sin is declared to be the servant of sin, and he who brings forth evil fruit is judged to be an evil tree. Christ's fan is in his hand, and he sweeps away the chaff: he sits as a refiner and consumes the dross. He lays the axe at the root of tree, and demands that the heart and spirit be right before God. If he sets forth obedience to the law, our Lord declares that it must be obedience in every point, or a man cannot be saved by it. If he accepts a follower he bids him count the cost and forsake all that he hath, or he cannot be his disciple. His moral standard is—"Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." If you want the law of God lowered you must not go to Christ, and if you wish to see the penalties of sin mitigated you must not go to Christ; for he is of all teachers the most severe against sin of every sort, and the most clear in foretelling its penalty. The friend of sinners is too much their friend to befriend their sin,—that he utterly abhors, and he will never rest till he has driven it out of them.

Neither does the Lord Jesus Christ screen sinners from that proper and wholesome rebuke which virtue must always give to vice. The Pharisees, no doubt, meant to say, "This man Jesus does mischief. We keep ourselves aloof from all low company, and in this way we do a good deal for these publicans, because we let them see the difference between holy and unholy men. When they look at our phylacteries between our eyes,

and observe the broad borders of our garments, and see how we wash our hands, and know how we pay tithe on mint and cummin, it must greatly edify them : no doubt they will go home and feel greatly ashamed that they cannot associate with such blessed and holy people as we are. Now, that man Christ goes in among them, and eats and drinks with them, and thus in some measure our protest is broken down. They will think a great deal of themselves now that the proper distance is no longer kept up, for they will say, if this man, who is, no doubt, a good man, associates with us, then after all we are not so bad as we were thought to be." That is how the Pharisees argued, and there are some around us who still think that the best thing you can possibly do with the degraded is to isolate them. Turn your back on them : the sight of a good man's back will be a fine moral lesson to them. Give them to feel that you are disgusted with them, and they will be brought to repent. But it does not turn out to be so. This process has generally been carried out by proud formalists and loathsome hypocrites, and has ended in making bad worse. Jesus never sanctions this mode of reformation. Look at him and admire. Did he say a word to Zacchæus about his having taken taxes by false accusation, or about his being cruel to the poor ? No, not a syllable. Christ's presence was enough rebuke for the man's sin. No sooner does a man perceive the love of Christ, and the perfection of his blessed person, than straightway sin receives its death warrant, and is ashamed to show itself any more. Jesus is the best rebuke to sin. The gospel of Jesus Christ does not say to you who live in sin, "You are fit company for Christians." Nor does it turn to godly people, and say, "Make these your daily associates and join in their mirth." Quite the reverse : but it does nevertheless say to Christians, "Go and seek out the lost and bring them to a better mind." We go not among the sin-smitten to catch their disease, but to cure it. Going in such a spirit a good man's presence is a far better rebuke to sin than a cold self-righteous isolation could have been. The gospel does not aim so much at rebuking sinners as at reclaiming them. Its business is not to make men feel remorse for having sinned, but to rid them from the power of sin.

Again, *it is not true*, as I have heard some say, *that the gospel makes pardon seem such a very easy thing, and therefore sin is thought to be a small matter.* "Oh," says one, "if men have only to believe and be saved, you put a premium upon sin by making deliverance from it to be so speedy a business." These cavillers know better, some of them, and if they do not know better let us teach them. When the Lord Jesus Christ forgave me, he taught me at the same moment to dread sin. I never had such a sense of the terrible evil of sin as I had in the moment of my forgiveness ; for where, think you, did I read my pardon ? I read it on his cross, written in crimson lines. I understood that, though the pardon was free to me, it cost him cries and groans to bring me near to God. It cost his soul an agony never to be described ere he could redeem one poor sinner from going down into the pit. It is a gross injustice to charge the preaching of the gospel to sinners with making sin to appear a trifle. The accusation is a baseless slander. They who know no atoning blood, they who know nothing of the sufferings of Christ, these are the men who can toy with sin, but those who

gaze upon the wounds of Christ cannot but tremble at sin. The great doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice, whenever it is fully received by the soul, makes sin to be exceeding sinful. Oh, sin, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but on the cross mine eye seeth thee slaying the incarnate God, wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes as I never should have done else.

Nor, though Christ be the friend of sinners, is it true that he makes men think lightly of personal character. "Oh," say some, "these Christians teach that believing a creed saves the soul, and that it does not matter at all how we live." This is an old libel. I remember reading much the same charge in a book which levelled its artillery at Wilberforce and his evangelical friends. The author said, "in a cant unmeaning jargon they talk much of vital faith, but they say little of vital benevolence." He goes on to remark that to teach men to be honest, cleanly, kind, and truthful, was far more important. Now, it is time that such a slander as that came to an end, but a lie has many lives, and though you kill it fifty times over, it soon restores itself to vitality. Look at the matter of fact. Jesus Christ did not teach Zacchæus by going to his house that character was of no consequence; on the contrary, Zacchæus perceived at once that character was of the greatest consequence, and so he stood forth, and said "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Let who will deny the logic of it, the fact is that when a man comes to believe in Jesus he has a higher appreciation of the excellence of character than any other man in the world; and he does not merely appreciate it in theory, but begins to seek after it for himself. Man's nature becomes renewed by the faith which some say will cause him to become indifferent to holiness. A man's whole life is changed by his believing in Jesus, and that which thus happily affects the character cannot honestly be said to lead to indifference concerning it. Even the remark I quoted now about Wilberforce was signally false, because it was through him and the party which gathered around him that benevolence gained one of her very noblest victories. How would the slave in the West Indies have obtained his liberty if it had not been for these very men, Wilberforce and the like, who while they held that faith in Christ alone could save the soul, felt that benevolence was the essential spirit of Christianity, and liberty the natural right of every man? They spent their whole strength in fighting against the mercenary feeling of the times, till the fetters of England's slaves were broken for ever.

It has been said that if we tell men that good works cannot save them, but that Jesus saves the guilty who believe in him, we take away all *motives for morality and holiness*. We meet that again by a direct denial: it is not so, we supply the grandest motive possible, and only remove a vicious and feeble motive. We take away from man the idea of performing good works in order to salvation, because it is a lie; good works will not save a sinner, nor is he able to perform them if they could save him. Works done with a view to salvation are not good, because they are evidently selfish, and so are not acceptable to God. The selfishness of the motive poisons the life of the work, and takes its goodness out of it. But when we tell men, "Believe in the Lord Jesus

Christ and you shall be saved," if they exercise faith they are saved, and being saved there grows up in their hearts gratitude to God, and from this springs a loving desire to serve God on account of what he has done; and this motive is not only very powerful but it is very pure, because the man does not then serve God with a view to self, but he serves him out of love, and works done out of love to God are the only good works possible to men. It supplies a motive which is clean, clear, pure, a motive moreover which is proven by the lives of saved men to be potent enough to keep them in the way of righteousness all their days.

The gospel of Jesus Christ gives men something more than motive, it supplies them with power and life, for wherever men believe on the Lord Jesus the Holy Spirit is surely at work with all his wondrous power. He enters the heart and changes it, turns the whole current of the soul, and creates within the man a new, living, conquering principle, akin to the nature of God himself, so that the man becomes and continues to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. This indwelling Spirit is not a theory, nor a doctrine, but a person; and his work is not a dream, but a conscious fact, a phenomenon to which all believers bear witness, for we have known him and felt his power, and bowed before the might and majesty of his influences. As the anointing on Aaron's head went where Aaron went, so where Christ is received the Holy Spirit comes, the new creation commences, and men are delivered from living as they did aforetime under the bondage of corruption. Thus we repel with indignation the charge that Christ is the aider or abettor of sin, and yet we preach with unabated eagerness this good news for sinners: whatever sin you may have committed, and however stained you may be with habits of evil, there is immediate pardon to be had, and complete salvation to be obtained, now, on this very spot, if you will but accept it, and trust Jesus for it. We assure you of this from our own experience. We also assure you that all your good works, and prayers, and tears, and almsgivings, will go for nothing if you trust in them; but though you may be covered with ten thousand times ten thousand sins, if you believe in Jesus you shall be saved from them all. He is a Saviour, and a great one, and he is able to deliver great sinners. This will not make you think lightly of sin, nor cause you to continue in sin that grace may abound; but it will give you the power which you want, it will supply you with a strength you have never been able to find, notwithstanding all your efforts: it will enable you to rejoice that you are saved, and in the strength of such an assurance you will find within your heart a love for holiness and an abhorrence of sin such as you never knew before. You will go to the door of your heart and say to the devil, "Get thee gone!" and to the lusts of the flesh, "Get ye behind me!" and as to all the temptations which arise from old companions you will shut the door in their faces, and say, "Depart hence."

III. In the third place, WE REJOICE IN THE VERY FACT WHICH HAS BEEN OBJECTED TO, that Jesus Christ comes to be guest with men who are sinners.

And first, dear brethren, we rejoice in it because it *affords hope to ourselves*. It often happens that we should never have a hope of his coming to be guest with us if he was not guest to sinners. To me such

gracious facts are needed to save me from despair. Oh, it is mighty easy to build up a fine experience and a pretty sanctification, and to imagine that you are getting on wonderfully, and becoming strong and pure, and very superior saints indeed. Let the devil deal with you five minutes, and he will show you something of quite another colour. Let your old corrupt nature only bubble up for a quarter of an hour, and you will find such a condition of things in your soul that you will cry out in bitterness of anguish: then will you find that fine words about experience do not fit your mouth, and all your notions of being somebody will evaporate like dew in the summer's sun. Oh the thousands of times when I have looked for any mousehole through which I might creep if I might but enter into a little hope. I love to preach a sinner's gospel, for it suits myself. I delight to preach holiness, and will aim at it as long as I live, and can never be content until I am perfect, but still my soul needs and must have the sinner's Saviour. Nothing else will do for me! Whenever I get nearest to my Lord and feel most of his preciousness, and enjoy most communion with him, I lay lower before him than ever, and feel it to be an unspeakable privilege to creep to his feet and wash them with my tears. I have at this moment no sort of hope but in mercy, great mercy rendered to a great sinner, through the sacrifice of Jesus. Brothers and sisters, what is there to depend upon, except the sinner's Saviour? If he does not save sinners, as sinners, by an act of free, rich, sovereign mercy, altogether apart from anything that is in them and of them, where will you and I ever appear? We do not wish to make any excuses for our own sin, we would loathe it and abhor ourselves before God on account of it, but still a wash in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness suits us to-day as well as it did seven-and-twenty years ago, when for the first time we looked to Jesus and lived. Do you not find it so, my beloved brethren? After half a century of knowing Christ, do you not find that you need a sinner's Saviour as much as ever. You will need him when you come to die even as you need him now, and while you are languishing into everlasting life he will be your strength and your song, and you will be glad to think that "this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

Again, we rejoice that it is true for another reason, because *this affords us hope for all our fellow men*. Suppose that our Lord did not visit any but the good, and moral, and excellent, then, alas, for poor London's back streets and crowded courts! Alas for the casual ward! Alas for the penitentiary, and alas for the jail! Alas for the fallen woman, and alas for the thief! But now there is hope for even these, and every philanthropist ought to feel deep down in his soul the profoundest gratitude to the Lord for this fact. This is earth's brightest star, her well of hope, her dawn of joy. Since Jesus Christ receives the guilty and saves the vile, despondency and despair have henceforth no right to haunt the abodes of men. Hope smiles on all, and invites the most fallen to look up and live. Yes, and let me tell you Pharisees, if there be any representatives of that section here to-day, though you do not like the idea of grace to the guilty, but cling to the idea of your being rewarded for your supposed merit, that it is a great mercy for you that Jesus receives great offenders, because *you* must be numbered among them. What is your heart but a raging sea of pride and enmity against

God, and even against your fellow men? You despise God's ordained plan of grace, and you look with contempt upon the guilty whom he deigns to save. Is it not the spirit of the devil which makes you think yourself so much above your fellow men? Is it not an intolerable inhumanity which makes you wish that the gospel were moulded to suit you and to shut out poor sinners? Who are you to carry your head so high? If you have never sinned as open transgressors have done, yet it is very probable that you would have done worse if you had been placed in the positions which they have occupied: with all their faults there are as great faults in you, and if somebody were to set to work to read the secrets of your soul aloud you would be much ashamed. Ah, there are many who are pluming themselves upon their virtues who, in the sight of God, are as rotten at the core as even the unchaste and the profane. There are more thieves, I doubt not, outside our jails than there are inside; and there are more double-dyed sinners than we ever dream of who appear respectable, and yet are abominable. Yes, even among nominal Christians there are plenty of scarlet sinners; they are always at the place of worship, very regular in all acts of outward devotion, and yet they indulge in secret uncleanness, and are as bad as any in the felons' prison. If my Master were to repeat to-day a certain scene in which he figured so wonderfully, some of those now present would be placed in an awkward position. A woman taken in adultery was brought before him. He did not for a moment justify her crime, but he said with great power and point, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." I say to you who pretend that you are righteous, that if your consciences speak you must own that you have no righteousness, but are so sinful that you have not a stone to fling, even against the grossest sinner. Convicted by your own conscience you may go out; but it were better still, if you were to stay here and say, "Yes, in my heart I am guilty too, and I now bless Christ that he is a sinner's Saviour, and that I may look to him this day and live."

We rejoice that this is the fact, because when we are working for the Lord *it cheers us up with the hope of fine recruits*. Many become very cold, stale, and mechanical in their work for Jesus within a short time after they are converted. The enthusiasm dies out, the warmth chills: new converts rebuke this declension. I remember a sailor, who before conversion used to swear, and I warrant you he would rattle it out, volley after volley. He became converted, and when he prayed it was much in the same fashion. How he woke everybody up the first time he opened his mouth at the prayer-meeting; the little church had quite a revival, for their old jog-trot pace would not do for the new comer, so full of love and zeal. The prayers offered in the meetings had become quite stereotyped, and so had everything else about them. There were the same sleepy people, the same long prayers, and the same dreary addresses; but Jack's conversion was like an earthquake, and startled everybody, and their zeal revived. They even began to think that perhaps sailors might be saved, and started a service on the quay, and did many other good things. The conversion of a great sinner is the best medicine for a sick church. In all the churches, you good people who are settled on your lees need stirring up every now and then, and one

of the best stirrings up you can have is to open the door of the church and see a Saul of Tarsus standing there to be admitted. The porter enquires, "Who is this that seeks admission here?" "A recruit," says he, and we look at him. Why, he is one of the devil's most famous soldiers, one of the men who carried the black flag in the battle; one who ridiculed us most! We are apt to look a little askance at him, for we feel dubious, and we refer him to the elders, that they may enquire and sift him, to see whether he is really a changed character. Perhaps these earnest men are not quite sure, and hesitate till they see more of him, and they are quite right to do so; but if the Lord has really called the sinner by his grace, no sooner does the church receive such a man than they find that he has brought with him fresh fire and throws a fresh impetus into the whole work. Our Lord Jesus, then, when he goes to be guest to a man that is a sinner, brings additional strength to the church, and finds her recruits of the very sort she most needs. We will therefore rejoice and bless the sinner's Saviour.

I wonder, this morning, where Zacchæus is, whether he is up in the gallery there! Has there come in here a man who is a sinner, and knows it, who if I were to pass a label up to him inscribed with the word "SINNER," would hang it round his neck and say, "I am the man"? Where are you, Zacchæus? for Jesus calls you. He means to save you at once. He says to you, "I must abide in your house to-day." Make haste down and open the door, and say, "Come in, my Lord, I am honoured to receive thee." Will any hesitate? Will any delay? May my Master cause to-day many a great sinner's heart to open and receive Jesus joyfully.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xviii. 31—43;
xix. 1—10.

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WHEREFORE SHOULD I WEEP?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 22ND, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"—Luke xxiii. 27—31.

CAN you picture the scene? Jesus is given up by Pilate to the Jews that they may do their will with him, and led by a small band of soldiers he is conducted into the public street, bearing his cross upon his shoulders. Perhaps they judged him to be weary with his night of watching and worn with his suffering from the scourge, and they feared lest he might die upon the road, and, therefore, with a cruel mercy they laid hold upon one in the crowd who had too loudly expressed his sympathy, impressed him into military service, and compelled him to assist in carrying the instrument of execution. You see the haughty scribes and the ribald throng; but the centre of the spectacle, and the cause of it all, was our Lord himself, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. We cannot paint him; all who have ever attempted to do so have to a large extent been unsuccessful, for there was upon his face a mingled majesty and meekness, loveliness and lowliness, sanctity and sorrow, which it would not be possible to express upon canvas or to represent in words. About his person there were abundant marks of cruelty. He had been scourged; every one could see it; his own garments which they had put upon him could not conceal the marks of the Roman lash. The traces of the crown of thorns were on his brow, and the rough usage of the soldiery had left its tokens too, so that his visage was more marred than that of any man, and his form more than the sons of men. And now he is being led away to be put to the shameful death of the cross. There were some glad eyes there, delighted that at last their victim was in their power, and that the eloquent tongue which had exposed

their hypocrisy would now be silenced in death. There, too, were the unfeeling Romans, to whom human life was a trifle, and all around gathered in dense masses the brutal mob, bribed to shout against their best friend. But all then present were not in this savage mood. There were some—and to the honour of the sex it is recorded that they were women—who entered their protest by their cries and lamentations. Not silently in their sorrow did they weep, but they began to lament aloud and bewail audibly, as though they were attending the funeral of some dear friend, or expected the death of one of their kindred. The voice of a woman's weeping has great power with most of us, but it would not stir the stony hearts of Roman legionaries; the wail of women was no more to them than the moaning of the winds among the forest trees: yet it must have struck many of less stern and stolid mould, and filled their souls with some measure of kindred feeling. Chiefly, however, did it strike One, the tenderest hearted among them all, One whose ear was delicately sensitive to every sound of sorrow; and though he had not answered Herod, and had given Pilate but a few words of reply, and amidst all the mockeries and scourgings had been as dumb as a sheep before her shearers, yet he paused, and looking round upon the weeping company, piteously yet sublimely broke the silence by saying to them, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." Such was the scene.

As for the words themselves, they are especially noteworthy, because they constitute the last connected discourse of the Saviour before he died. All that he said afterwards was fragmentary and mainly of the nature of prayer. A sentence to John, and to his mother, and to the dying thief: just a word or two looking downward, but for the most part he uttered broken sentences, which flew upwards on the wings of strong desire. This was his last address, a farewell sermonette; delivered amid surroundings most sad and solemn, restraining tears and yet at the same time causing them to flow. We reckon the words to be all the more weighty and full of solemnity because of the occasion, but even apart from this, the truths delivered were in themselves of the utmost importance and solemnity. This last discourse of our Lord before his death was terribly prophetic to a world rejecting him, portentous with a thousand woes to a people whom he loved, woes which even he could not avert, because they had rejected his interposition, and refused the mercy which he came to bring. "Daughters of Jerusalem," said he, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." Not many hours before he had himself set them the example by weeping over the doomed city, and crying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Looking even upon the surface of the words you will perceive that they bear his undoubted image and superscription. Who but he would have spoken after this sort? You are sure that the passage is genuine, for it is in all respects so inimitably Christlike. See how self-oblivious he was; for himself he asks not even tears of sympathy. Was there no cause for grief? Yea, cause enough; and yet he says, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves," as if all his thoughts were taken up

with other griefs than his own, and he would not have a tear wasted upon him, but spent on woes which grieved him more than his own pangs. Observe the majesty of the speech, too, steeped as the speaker was in misery. You can see that his is sorrow which well deserved to be wept over, but he is not overcome by it, but rather his royal soul reigns in the future, and as a king he anticipates his sceptre and his judgment seat, and foretells the doom of those who now insult him. Here is no craven spirit, no confession of defeat, no appeal for pity, no shadow of petty resentment, but on the contrary a majestic consciousness of strength. With his calm, prophetic eye he looks beyond the intervening years and sees Jerusalem besieged and captured. He speaks as though he heard the awful shrieks which betokened the entrance of the Romans into the city, and the smiting down of young and old, and women and children. Nay, mark how his piercing eye sees further yet: he beholds and describes the day when he shall sit upon the throne of judgment and summon all men to his bar, when he who was then the weary man before his foes should alarm the ungodly by the appearance of his countenance, so that they would call to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the rocks to hide them from his face. He speaks as if conscious of the majesty that would be upon him in that dreadful day, and yet at the same time pitiful towards those who by their sins were bringing upon themselves so terrible a doom. He says in effect, "Weep for those concerning whom it would have been better that they had never been born, and for whom annihilation would be a consummation devoutly to be wished." He dries up the tears which were flowing for himself, that the women may draw up the sluices of their souls, and let the torrents of their grief flow forth for impenitent sinners who will be filled with unutterable dismay at his second coming.

May the Holy Spirit help me while handling this awful subject. The text very readily divides itself into two parts; the one may be headed "*Weep not*;" and the other, "*Weep*." The first is "*Weep not*," or what the Saviour restrained; the second is "*Weep*," or what the Saviour enjoined.

I. He said to the weeping women, "*WEEP NOT*." There are some cold, calculating expositors who make it out that our Lord reproved these women for weeping, and that there was something wrong, or if not altogether wrong, yet something very far from commendable in their sorrow,—I think they call it "the sentimental sympathy" of these kind souls. There is no being much more unnatural than a cold-blooded commentator, who bites at every letter, and nibbles at the grammatical meaning of every syllable, translating with his lexicon, but never exercising common sense, or allowing even the least play to his heart. Blame these women! No, *bless* them again and again. It was the one redeeming trait in the dread march along the Via Dolorosa; let it not be dreamed that Jesus could have censured those who wept for him. No, No, No, a thousand times No! These gentle women appear in a happy contrast to the chief priests, with their savage malice, and to the thoughtless multitude with their fierce cry of "Crucify him, crucify him!" They seem to me to have shown a noble courage in daring to express their sympathy with one whom everybody else hunted to death

with such ferocity. To espouse his cause amid those hoarse cries of "Crucify him, crucify him," was courage more than manly; those women were heroines more valiant than those who rush upon the spoil. Those lamentations in sympathy with him who was being led to die are worthy of our praise and not of our criticism. Our Lord accepted the sympathy they evinced, and it was only his great disinterested unselfishness which made him say, "Spare your griefs for other sorrows." It was not because they were wrong, but because there was something still more necessary to be done than even to weep for him. I do not think we erred when we sang just now—

"A moment give a loose to grief,
Let grateful sorrows rise,
And wash the bloody stains away
With torrents from your eyes."

Have we not all felt it to be a gracious exercise to sing in unison that almost dirge—

"Oh come and mourn with me awhile;
Oh come ye to the Saviour's side;
Oh come, together let us mourn:
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified."

"Have we no tears to shed for him,
While soldiers scoff and Jews deride?
Ah! look how patiently he hangs;
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified."

Who among us can blame Dr. Watts and others when they sing in words like these.

"Thus might I hide my blushing face,
While his dear cross appears,
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt my eyes to tears."

There can be nothing ill about the weeping of these women, and therefore let us proceed to say, first, that *their sorrow was legitimate* and well-grounded. There was reason for them weeping. They saw him suffering, friendless, and hunted to death, and they could not but bewail him. Had I been there and seen him all alone, and marked the cruel eyes that watched him, and heard the malicious voices which assailed him, I too must have wept. And least I hope I am not so past feeling as to have looked on without overflowing sorrow. See those bleeding shoulders, those lacerated temples—mark, above all, that quiet, unrivalled godlike countenance, so marred with sacred grief. One must have wept surely if one had a heart anywhere within him. And to think that he who suffered thus, and was about to suffer so much more, should be so gentle, and so unresisting, was not this cause for intensest sympathy? He was meek and lowly in heart and therefore he returned none of those fierce looks, and answered none of those ferocious words. He was like a lamb in the midst of wolves, or a dove surrounded by a thousand hawks, or a milk-white hind amid baying hounds. There was none to pity and none to help; shall we, then, refuse our compassion? ye women's eyes, ye did well to weep: how could ye help it, since

ye were mothers of children and hence had hearts to love ? How could ye help weeping for him who was so lowly, so gentle, so unselfish, so submissive to all they put upon him ? Surely it was a superfluity of malice to be hunting him to death who even in life was so much the man of sorrows. And then withal he was so innocent and pure. What had he done amiss ? They could not answer Pilate's challenge—"Why, what evil hath he done ?" There was no fault in him, they could not find any. You could see by the very look of him that he was the purest of all mankind, that all around him was sin and vanity, and he alone was holiness and truth. Wherefore, then, should they lead him forth among malefactors, and nail those blessed hands and feet to the wood, and hang him to a tree ? Above all, in addition to his being innocent of fault he had been so full of kindness, of more than kindness,—of infinite love to all mankind, and even in his deepest sorrow boundless benevolence shone in his countenance, beaming as the sun. He looked upon his enemies and his glance was royal but it was tender too : "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was trembling on his lips. He would not harm them, not he ; he would not curse them though his curse had withered them, nor even frown upon them, though that frown might have secured his liberation ; he was too good to render evil for evil. These women recollected what a life he had led ; how he had fed the hungry, perhaps some of them had even eaten of the loaves and fishes : how he had healed their children, raised their dead, and had dislodged foul fiends from the bodies of their friends. He had preached openly in their streets, and he had never taught illwill, but always gentleness and love. He had been popular, and stood at the head of the multitude at one time, but he had never used his power for selfish purposes ; he had ridden through their streets in pomp, but the pomp was simple and homely ; on a colt, the foal of an ass, had he ridden with children for his courtiers, and with no sound of the trumpets of war, but only with the children's cries of "Hosannah, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Why should they crucify him ? He had done nothing but good. His noble presence seemed to appeal to the women, and they asked each other, "For which of his works would they slay him ? For which of his actions would they put him to death ?" He, the friend of the friendless, why should he die ? I cannot, I say again, but commend the tears of these women. It is little marvel that they should weep and bewail when they saw the innocent one about to die.

I think, too, that *this weeping on the part of the women was a very hopeful emotion*. It was far better certainly than the non-emotion or the cruelty of those who formed that motley throng. It showed some tenderness of heart, and tenderness of heart, though it be but natural, may often serve as a groundwork upon which better and holier and more spiritual feelings may be placed. It is objected that persons weep when they hear the story of other griefs besides those of Jesus, and I am glad they do : should they not weep with them that weep ? It is also objected that this natural sympathy may in many cases be as much due to the skill of the orator as in others it is the undoubted result of the music of the oratorio. I know it is so. I am going to show you that mere emotional sympathy is not all, nor a half, nor a tenth, of what is wanted ; still I should be sorry if I thought myself capable of remembering

the griefs of Jesus without emotion, while other men's woes affected me; and I should greatly deplore the fact if it were indeed true that you were all, especially you women, so hardened that you could think of Jesus of Nazareth bleeding and dying without your hearts beginning to melt. The emotion is good at any rate so far that if it were absent you would be bereft of humanity and turned to stones. It is hopeful because it opens a door through which something better may enter. This tenderness is a natural stock suitable for grafting something far higher upon. He who can weep for the sorrows of Christ may soon be on the road towards weeping over the sin which caused the sorrow, or he may be on the highway towards being able to lament, as Christ bids men lament, those other griefs and miseries which sin brings upon themselves and upon their children. I would not carry the emotional towards Christ to an excess, nor ask men to make Jesus' death a fountain of sorrow only, since it is also a source of joy. I would deplore that idolatrous emotion which weeps before a hideous image, or mourns over a touching picture; but still I would not have men at the thought of Jesus dying act as if they were stocks and stones, but prove that they mourn for him whom they have pierced.

Having said this much, we now add that *on our Lord's part such sorrow was fitly repressed*; because after all, though naturally good, it is not more than natural, and falls short of spiritual excellence. It is no proof of the work of the Spirit upon your heart that you weep as you hear the story of Christ's death, for probably you would have been even more affected had you seen a murderer hanged. It is no proof that you are truly saved, because you are moved to great emotions whenever you hear the details of the Crucifixion, for the Bulgarian atrocities excited you equally as much. I think it good that you should be moved, as I have said before, but it is only naturally and not spiritually good. Doubtless there are many who have shed more tears over the silly story of a love-sick maid in a frivolous novel than they have ever given to the story of the Lover of our souls; though they have felt emotion when they have pictured the sufferings of Emmanuel, they have felt even more when the bewitching pen of fiction has sketched some imaginary picture of fancied woes. No, no, these natural sympathies are not so to be commended that we wish you to be continually exercised with them: our Lord did well to set them healthy bounds.

Besides such feeling is generally very evanescent. Tears of mere emotion because of the external sufferings of Christ are speedily wiped away and forgotten. We do not know that any of these women ever became our Lord's converts. Amongst those who met in the upper room, we do not know that any had taken part with this company of weepers; these were women of Jerusalem, and the followers of Christ at his death, who ministered unto him, were generally women from Galilee. For this see Matt. xxvii, 54 and 56. I fear that the most of these Jerusalem sympathizers forgot to-morrow that they had wept to-day. I may be mistaken, but there is nothing in the mere fact of their lamenting the Saviour's doom which would prove them to be his regenerated followers. The morning cloud and the early dew are fit emblems of such fleeting emotions.

Such weeping too is morally powerless; it has no effect upon the

mind ; it does not change the character ; it does not cause the putting away of sin, nor create real and saving faith in Jesus Christ. Many tears are shed under powerful sermons that are so much wasted fluid ; the discourse is over, the sorrow has ceased. There was no work of grace upon the inner heart, it was all surface work and no more.

The worst of it is such feeling is often deceptive, for people are apt to think, "I must have something good in me, for what a time of weeping I had under the sermon, and how tender I felt when I heard the description of Christ upon the cross!" Yes, and thus thou mayest wrap thyself up in the belief that thou art under the influence of the Holy Spirit when, after all, it is only ordinary human feeling. Thou mayest conclide, "Surely these drops flow from a heart of flesh," when it may be only moisture condensed upon a heart of stone.

This feeling, too, may stand in the way of something a great deal better. Jesus would not have these women weep for one thing, because they were to weep for another thing which far more seriously demanded their weeping. Ye need not weep because Christ died one-tenth so much as because your sins rendered it necessary that he should die. You need not weep over the crucifixion, but weep over your transgression, for your sins nailed the Redeemer to the accursed tree. To weep over a dying Saviour is to lament the remedy ; it were wiser to bewail the disease. To weep over the dying Saviour is to wet the surgeon's knife with tears ; it were better to bewail that spreading polypus which that knife must cut away. To weep over the Lord Jesus as he goes to the cross is to weep over that which is the subject of the highest joy that ever heaven and earth have known ; your tears are scarcely needed there ; they are natural, but a deeper wisdom will make you brush them all away, and chant with joy his victory over death and the grave. If we must continue our sad emotions let us lament that we should have broken the law which he thus painfully vindicated, let us mourn that we should have incurred the penalty which he even to the death was made to endure. Jesus wished them not so much to look at his outward sufferings as at the secret inward cause of that outward sorrow, namely, the transgression and the iniquity of his people, which had laid the cross upon his shoulders and surrounded him with enemies. As I quoted just now certain verses which led us to lament our Lord, let me propose to you as better still those words of Watts—

"'Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were ;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.

"'Twas you that pull'd the vengeance down
Upon his guiltless head :
Break, break, my heart, oh burst mine eyes'
And let my sorrows bleed.

"Strike, mighty grace, my flinty soul,
Till melting waters flow,
And deep repentance drown mine eyes
In undissembled woe."

II. Now we pass on from "Weep not" to "WEEP." May God the

Holy Spirit help us to dwell upon that for a while with profit to our souls. Though Jesus stops one channel for tears, he opens another and a wider one. Let us look to it.

First, when he said, "Weep for yourselves" he meant that *they were to lament and bewail the sin which had brought him where he was*, seeing he had come to suffer for it; and he would have them weep because that sin would bring them and their children into yet deeper woe. You know that just before he uttered this remarkable saying the husbands, and the fathers, and the sons of those women had been crying with loud voices, "Let him be crucified," and when Pilate had taken water and washed his hands to show that he was innocent of the blood of Jesus, they had imprecated upon their nation, and upon their unborn sons, the curse which follows from such a deed. "Then answered all the people, his blood be on us and on our children"; and though these women lamented and mourned, yet over their heads the men who had spoken for the nation had gathered the thunder cloud of divine wrath. Jesus points to it and says, "Weep for the national sin, weep for the national curse, which will surely come upon you, because you are putting the just one to death." Yea, deeper still was his meaning, for all those about him were in a sense guilty of his death; and you, and I, and all the rest of mankind have been, in our measure, the cause of the Saviour's crucifixion. Oh, brethren and sisters, this is the reason why we should weep, because we have broken the divine law, and rendered it impossible that we should be saved except Jesus Christ should die. If we have not believed in Jesus Christ we have this cause for lamentation, that our sin abides upon us at this present moment. That curse which crushed the Saviour down till he said, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*, is resting upon some who are here this morning. O souls, you need not pity the dying Christ, but pity yourselves. On your own selves your sin is resting; and your children growing up unconverted, hardened in rebellion against God by your example—their sin is resting upon them too, and this is the overflowing cause why you should weep. And you believers, you from whom sin has been lifted, who are forgiven for his name's sake, yet lament that you should have sinned, and with your joy for pardoned guilt mourn that Christ had to carry the burden which you heaped together, and to bear the penalty which you deserved. All round, brethren, there is abounding cause for sorrow for sin,—a sweet sorrow from the Lord's people and a bitter sorrow from those who have no part nor lot in the result of Christ's passion as yet, but who nevertheless are partakers in the crime which slew the Son of God.

I beg you now to look again into the reason why our Lord bade them weep. It was, first, for their sin, but it was next *for the impending punishment of their sins*. The punishment of the national sin of the Jew was to be the scattering of his nation and the total destruction of its holy city; and well does our Saviour speak of it in terrible language, for under all heaven and in all history there never was such a scene of misery as the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. I need not give you any outline of it, because you must be familiar with that painful subject where every horror seems to be combined in one, and exaggerated to the utmost. Nothing has ever surpassed it; I question if anything ever equalled it. But our Lord, as I have hinted, looked

further than the Roman sword and the massacre of the Jews. Often in his preaching you do not know whether he is talking of the siege of Jerusalem or of the judgment day, for the one was in his mind such a foreshadowing, rehearsal, and type of the other, that in his language he often seemed to melt the two into one. He means to you and to me this morning to speak, not of besieged Jerusalem, but of that day of wrath, that dreadful day, whose coming what man among us shall be able to to abide? Concerning that there is cause enough for weeping, for when that day comes it will find some men in such a state that it would have been better for them that they had never been born. When the dreadful sentence shall come from the Judge, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels," they will bless the barren womb and the breast at which no child has sucked. Then will impenitent sinners bitterly exclaim "Cursed be the day wherein I was born : let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee ; making him very glad." They will wring their hands in anguish and curse their existence and wish that they had never seen the light. So terrible will the doom of the wicked be that mothers who looked upon the birth of their children as the consummation of their joy shall wish they had been barren, and never carried a babe at their breasts ; they shall count those happy who were childless, whom perhaps in their hearts in their past lives they despised. Existence is in itself a blessing, but what shall be the misery which shall make men wish that they had never breathed ? Yet, alas, such is the condition of multitudes while I am speaking to you, and such will soon be the condition of some who are looking into my face now, except they repent ! Alas ! alas ! Weep ye for yourselves and for your children !

Further, our Lord went on, with that melting voice of his, in overflowing grief to say that they might reserve their tears for those who would ere long wish to be annihilated, but wish in vain. "Then shall men begin to say to the rocks, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us." The falling of the mountain would grind them to powder, and they wish for that : the descent of the hill upon them would bury them in a deep abyss, and they would rather be immured in the bowels of the earth for ever than have to look upon the face of the Great Judge. They ask to be crushed outright, or to be buried alive sooner than to feel the punishment of their sins. Then shall be fulfilled the word of the Lord by his servant John, "And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it ; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." Rev. ix. 6. Ah, sirs, extinction is a boon too great to be permitted to the ungodly. Earth will have no bowels of compassion for the men who polluted her and rejected her Lord. The mountains will reply, "We fall at God's bidding, not at the petition of his enemies," and the hills in their stolid silence will answer, "We cannot, and we would not if we could, conceal you from the justice which you yourselves wilfully provoked." No, there shall be no refuge for them, no annihilation into which they can fly : the very hope of it were heaven to the damned. Oh, could they but expect it ; but it must not, shall not be. Their cry for extinction shall be in vain. Now, if ye have tears for Jesus dying.

reserve them for those to whom death is but the beginning of evils ! If ye have griefs for him to whom they said " Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck," have still more tears for those who shall curse the hour in which they were conceived. Here is indeed a subject which demands the tears of nations, and of ages,—souls lost beyond all remedy, seeking destruction itself as a blessing, and *beginning* petitions of unutterable anguish, which shall never cease and never avail.

Then our Lord goes on to draw a wonderful parallel and contrast between his sufferings and those to be lamented, for he says, " If they do these things in a green tree, what shall they do in the dry ?" I suppose he meant, " If I, who am no rebel against Cæsar, suffer so, how will those suffer whom the Romans take in actual rebellion at the siege of Jerusalem ?" And he meant next to say, " If I who am perfectly innocent, must nevertheless be put to such a death as this, what will become of the guilty ?" If when fires are raging in the forest, the green trees full of sap and moisture crackle like stubble in the flame, how will the old dry trees burn, which are already rotten to the core and turned to touchwood, and so prepared as fuel for the furnace. If Jesus suffers who hath no sin, but is full of the life of innocence, and the sap of holiness, how will they suffer who have long been dead in sin, and are rotten with iniquity ? As Peter puts it in another place, " For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God : and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God ? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?"

Note well that the sufferings of our Lord, though in some respects far beyond all conceivable woes, have yet some points about them in which they differ with advantage from the miseries of lost souls. For, first, our Lord knew that he was innocent, and therefore his righteousness upheld him. Whatever he suffered he knew that he deserved none of it : he had no stings of conscience, nor agonies of remorse. Now, the sting of future punishment will lie in the indisputable conviction that it is well deserved. If there were one woe in hell more than a lost soul deserved it would act as an opiate to its pain ; but the justice of every infliction will be the tooth of the worm, the edge of the sword. No dream of innocence, or conceit of self-righteousness, will survive the judgment day, but conscience will be aroused and armed to do its work ; the wicked will perceive their guilt and cling to it, and this will make their punishment the more severe.

The finally impenitent will be tormented by their own passions, which will rage within them like an inward hell ; but our Lord had none of this. There was no evil in him, no lusting after evil, no self-seeking, no rebellion of heart, no anger, or discontent. A man in whom there is no evil passion to stir up cannot know those fierce pangs and wild throes with which raging sin rends the soul. Pride, ambition, greed, malice, revenge, these are the fuel of hell's fire. Men's selves, not devils, are their tormentors ; their inward lusts are worms that never die, and fires that never can be quenched : there could be none of this in our divine Lord. Again, lost souls hate God and love sin, but Christ ever loved God and hated sin. Now, to love evil is misery ; when undisguised and rightly

understood sin is hell, and it is love of evil continued in the soul, which causes the perpetuity of the lost estate of men; but the holy Jesus, though suffering beyond all conception, could not feel the pangs which come of hating good and loving evil. He was the green tree and the ungodly are the dry trees; yet if the innocent one suffer so, with what pains will guilty souls be racked by their avenging consciences.

Our Lord Jesus knew that every pang he suffered was for the good of others: he endured cheerfully, because he saw that he was redeeming a multitude that no man can number from going down to the pit: but there is no redeeming power about the sufferings of the lost, they are not helping any one, nor achieving a benevolent design. The great God has good designs in their punishment, but they are strangers to any such a purpose.

Our Lord had a reward before him, because of which he endured the cross, despising the shame; but the finally condemned have no prospect of reward nor hope of rising from their doom. How can they expect either? *He* was full of hope, they are full of despair. "It is finished" was for him, but there is no "It is finished" for them.

Their sufferings, moreover, are self-caused, their sin was their own. He endured agonies because others had transgressed, and he willed to save them. Their sufferings are self-chosen, for they would not be persuaded to forsake their sins; but he, from necessity of love, was made to bleed—the cup could not pass from him if his people were redeemed. The torments of the lost will be self-inflicted, they are suicides to their souls, the venom in their veins is self-created and self-injected. They torment themselves with sin, to which they cleave, but it pleased the Father to bruise the Son, and the necessity for his bruising lay not in himself, but in others.

Now, dear friends, I think I have said enough on this painful matter to assure you that the most terrible warning to impenitent men in all the world is the death of Christ; for if God spared not his own Son, on whom was only laid imputed sin, will he spare sinners whose sins are actual, and their own? If he smote him to the death who only stood in the sinner's stead, will he let the impenitent sinner go free? If he who always did his Father's will, and was obedient even unto death, must be forsaken of God, what will become of those who reject Christ, and live and die enemies to the Most High? Here is cause for weeping; and, very solemnly would I say it, God help me to say it so that you may feel it—the most dreadful thought is that perhaps we ourselves are in the condition of guiltiness before God, and are hastening on to the judgment which Christ has foretold. Oh, think if within the next six months—nay, stretch it as far as you like—if within the next fifty years some of us should be asking the hills to cover us, and wishing that we never had been born? What an awful prospect! And yet, unless we are renewed in heart, and made believers in Jesus Christ, that certainly must be our doom. Think of your children, too, who are growing up about you, capable of understanding, and responsible for their actions. Oh, if they live as they now live, and die as they now are, you may wish they had never been given to you, and had never borne your name. Think of this, and weep. Dear friends, if the Lord would put you into a right state of heart, you would scarcely think of an uncon-

verted person's condition without the deepest pity. You would not hear an oath in the street without the tear starting to your eye.

That was a dreadful spectacle which I pictured to you just now,—our Lord bearing his cross and the women weeping; but how much more awful is that before me! I see a soul carrying about itself the instrument of its own destruction, and going onward with it to its doom! Sin is the cross to which the soul will be fastened, and habits and depravities are the nails. The soul is bearing its sin, and loving to bear it. See, it is going to execution, but at each step it laughs. Every step it takes is bearing it towards hell, and yet it makes mirth! Lo, the infatuated one scoffs at the voice that warns him, and every scoff he utters is increasing his guilt. Look forward to his end, its never-ending end; look forward to it steadily, with calm and tearful gaze: is it not an awful spectacle? But what if you should be beholding yourselves as in a vision, or seeing your child in the glass of prophecy! If it be your case, I beseech you repent of your sin, bewail your condition, and fly to Christ for shelter: and if it be your child give heaven no rest, plead continually at the throne of grace, till you have brought down a blessing from God upon your offspring. Never cease to pray until your sons and your daughters are safe landed on the Rock of Ages, and so secured there that they will need no other rock to hide them in the day when Christ shall come. I beseech you, beloved Christian friends, ask for tenderness towards sinners, towards all sinners, and let your tenderness be shown in fervent prayer, in incessant effort, and in holy sympathy towards the wandering ones.

Alas, I have but stuttered and stammered compared with the manner in which I hoped to have spoken. I may have failed in expressing myself, but God can bless the word none the less. The subject is worthy of an angel's tongue; it needs Christ himself completely to expound it. Would God he might by his own Spirit expound it to your hearts in the leisure of this afternoon. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xxiii. 1—31.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—178, 265, 312.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHY MAY I REJOICE?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 29TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."—Luke x. 20.

You will remember that last Lord's-day we saw our Lord correcting a very natural grief, and supplying its place by a more needful sorrow, as he said to the women, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."* Now, this morning we shall see him correcting a very natural joy, and directing its gladness into a more elevated channel. "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." If we commit ourselves to him he will guide us aright in all things, and teach us to sanctify alike our grief and our gladness.

We shall commence our discourse by saying that our Lord did not blame or upbraid the seventy for rejoicing that the devils were subject to them. It would have been a very strange thing if they were not joyous on the occasion of so great a success. They had been sent forth upon their Lord's errand, they had gone forward unhesitatingly in his name, girded with his strength, and his power had been revealed so that his name had been glorified: should they not rejoice? It was the kingdom of God which they had proclaimed; should they not be joyful? It was their Lord's enemy, as well as their own, who had "fallen like lightning from heaven:" should they not exult? It was not likely, therefore, that the Lord Jesus was angry at their joy when they returned again, saying, "Lord, even the spirits are subject unto us through thy name." We must read our Lord's words according to the manner of Oriental speech. The peculiar idiom of our Saviour's speech often makes him appear to be actually forbidding what he only places in a secondary place. He did not mean in the present instance to censure their joy in their success, but only to make it subordinate to another rejoicing, and to prevent its growing to excess.

* See No 1,320—"Wherefore should I weep?"

Some have thought that they detected in the seventy too much personal exultation, if not an almost childish triumph, in the success which they had achieved. I must confess I see small trace of such a feeling in their report to their Master. Our Lord himself evidently coincided with the truth of their report, for he also said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven:" I can hardly think that he could have seen that sight without joy, and, therefore, in some measure, he shared in the feelings of his servants. Had he observed in these brethren that excess of childish exultation and vainglory which is supposed, I think he would hardly have gone on to invest such novices with yet more power; and yet he did so, for we read in the nineteenth verse—"Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." Had they been intoxicated with a sort of childish glee, the wisdom of our Lord, as commander in that crusade, would have led him to say to them, "I had many things to have given unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. I see already that you are intoxicated with your present victories, and therefore I must withhold from you the extraordinary gifts of my kingdom till you are better prepared to receive them with humility and to use them with wisdom." Such prudent conduct had been in accordance with the usual proceedings of our wise Teacher. But he saw no such excessive exultation: whatever he might fear as likely to occur by-and-by, he saw nothing as yet to blame in them, and so he went on to say, "therefore I give you power over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you." We cannot understand him to be condemning their rejoicing over the fall of devils, for he says, "Rejoice rather," and this almost implies that you may rejoice in the first subject of joy in some degree. "Notwithstanding," he says, "in this rejoice not; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." The one is forbidden only in comparison with the other. We may rejoice that God blesses our labours, but still it must be a far less prominent joy than that which springs out of our personal interest in the salvation of God. Church members may be glad when they see a great revival, and their numbers largely increased; but at such times it is doubly needful to look to vital godliness and personal religion, or the joy may be turned into mourning.

Now, brethren, taking the incident as it will apply to ourselves, there may be some of you here present to whom God has given many gifts for use in the kingdom of heaven, he may also have given you influence in his church, and power among men of the world; and, moreover, your gifts and your power have not been used in vain, they have been made useful in many ways, so that your course has been one of honour and success. The kingdom of God has come near to many through you, and the great enemy's kingdom has suffered injury by your means. Because of all this you are greatly cheered. Is this wrong? Ought you not to be full of joy? I say yes, assuredly, you are bound to be glad. We should all be grateful for gifts, grateful for influence, grateful for success; but a gratitude which is not attended with joy can scarcely be called gratitude at all. Would you have gratitude lament the possession of the blessing for which she is grateful? There must be joy in the thing received, or else one can hardly be

imagined to be thankful. If gratitude for these things be a duty, then surely a measure of joy concerning them must also be a duty. You may rejoice that to you is this grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and you may be glad that from you the word of God has sounded forth throughout all the region in which you dwell. Thus far we go, but we must not exceed due bounds, lest we become transgressors: this joy must be held within its own lines, and never suffered to run riot. Let us pause and see how our Lord Jesus puts a restraining "notwithstanding" and a repressing negative upon this joy, when he judges that it is in danger of passing due bounds; and let us also note how he supplies the place of this joy by something higher and better when he says—"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

We shall dwell upon three things this morning. First, *the joy which needs moderating*—"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not"; secondly, *the joy which needs exciting*—"Rather rejoice"; and then, thirdly, *the joy of the Lord in sympathy with this last joy*. Just read the first line of the twenty-first verse—"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." Our Lord could unite in this joy under certain aspects of it.

I. First, then, **THE JOY WHICH NEEDS MODERATING**. It is the joy of triumph over evil spirits, the joy of having preached the gospel and wrought wonders—in a word, the joy of gifts, power, and success. This needs moderating—first, because *it is so apt to degenerate into pride*. The seventy were not proud, for they said, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us *through thy name*." This was a very proper way of reporting results. They did not arrogate any measure of the success to themselves, but they ascribed it to the matchless, all-conquering name which they had used. So far, all was well; but, my brethren, the tendency of human nature is towards self-exaltation, and so by degrees we come to emphasise the "*to us*," and we allow the "*through thy name*" to be uttered softly, and yet more softly, until it is only used as a matter of form, and we in our hearts ascribe the whole success to ourselves. If God shall bless any man with long-continued success in soul-winning, even though that be a higher achievement than the casting out of devils, there is an evil tendency in our corrupt nature which will tempt such a man to dream that in him there is some peculiar excellence or special virtue. He will say in his heart, "Lord, even great sinners and proud infidels have been turned to thee by my preaching," and he may at the same time forget that it was not his preaching, but the name of Jesus, which accomplished the notable deed. We are nothing, however much God may have wrought by us; all the glory is due unto the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, yet we are so base as to take credit to ourselves. Who among us can claim to have been perfectly free from this temptation? True, the Lord keeps his servants humble when he uses them, and if they abound in grace they may safely abound in gifts also; saints may be safely trusted with abundant influence if they are abundantly under the influence of the Holy Spirit: but to be preserved when thus eminently honoured is an exceedingly great favour. When we see a successful worker walking very humbly, we may say, "This is the finger of God." Leave corrupt

nature to itself, and as a warm atmosphere soon causes dead flesh to become putrid, so will the ease and comfort of self-congratulation and prosperity speedily breed corruption in human nature: hence it is needful that joy in gift and success should be kept under due control, and if it be tolerated in a measure, as it may be, it must nevertheless not be indulged to any great extent lest evil consequences come to us. Hitherto may it come, but no further, lest the Lord behold us waxing exceeding proud, and put us aside from his work altogether, and take unto himself other instruments which will not attempt to rob him of his glory.

Again, this joy which needs to be moderated should be restrained by the reflection that *it is no evidence of grace in the heart that we possess gifts, or that we are successful.* Talents are possessed even by wicked and slothful servants. Grace without talent will save, but talent without grace will only increase our condemnation. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." The highest conceivable gifts for church work, and the greatest influence in the church are worthless apart from grace. The possession of such powers may be accompanied by hypocrisy and falsehood,—it was so in our Lord's day. Judas wrought miracles; Judas preached the gospel; Judas was not only a member of the church, but a trusted officer in it; yet Judas went unto his own place, for he was a son of perdition. Our Lord tells us to expect many cases of graceless workers, for he says, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Observe that this warning speaks not of a few, but of many; we shall not only see a Judas once in eighteen centuries, but *many* of whom this shall be the case. Men have gone forth making use of the name of Jesus, and God has honoured the name, though he has not accepted the men who used it. They have preached, and the message has been true, and God has owned the truth; but the men have not been true, and consequently they have been abhorred of the Lord. Good seed will grow even though it was scattered by a leprous hand. Let us beware, however, of speaking truth with a lying lip. Let us beware, lest we be like Balaam, who had his eyes opened to see marvellous visions of the future, and his tongue inspired to utter deep things, and yet he fell among the accursed, because he ran greedily after a reward. Do not rejoice, then, dear brethren, because God blesses you in what you are doing, so that you see souls saved and yourself honoured, for this might happen to one for whom the Lord has no regard; but rather rejoice in being really and truly one of the Lord's own people, written in heaven. Let us keep under our body, and watch unto prayer, lest haply, after having preached to others, we ourselves should become castaways. It will be a dreadful thing to keep the door of the King's great banquet hall, and open it to others, and yet to perish with hunger yourself.

Moreover, it is very unsafe to rejoice unduly in the work which we have done, because *the work after all may not turn out to be all that it appears*. I do not know how much of real good the seventy had wrought. There can scarcely have been very many converts, for otherwise the number of the names would have been greater when the disciples assembled in the upper room at Pentecost. We will not, however, judge the work of the seventy; but we do know this, that it is very easy for us to go forth and for a time to succeed, so that it seems as if even the devils were subject to us, and yet there may be no true work of God. Crowds may gather to listen, there may be manifestations of deep emotion, the number of the conversions put down on paper may be very great, and yet there may be little or nothing in the whole matter worthy of real joy. So it may be in other forms of service: in the Sunday-school or in any other place, we may think we have succeeded, and yet we may have only been building on the sand a baseless structure which the next tide will carry away. We ought to remember that every man's work must be tested ere long, "for the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." It is too early to begin to rejoice until the fire has passed over our life-work. The edifice is very lofty, and apparently very fair, but what if those walls should turn out to be composed of straw, the foundations of stubble, and the rafters of dry wood? How soon will they yield to the fire, and how rapidly will the fabric disappear. He who hath built the tiniest cell of sparkling gems, or the smallest cottage of gold, has done more than he who has heaped aloft into the air a pyramid of hay. It is not the quantity of work done, it is not the space occupied in church history, it is not the noise of our great doings: the question is, what is really and truly done; the quality is far more important than the quantity, the enduring character of the work is far more to be considered than the flash and the glare of it. Therefore rejoice not, O young man, in all the brilliant success which has for the present attended thee, and rejoice not even thou old man, though thou hast had half a century of prosperity; rejoice not so much in this as to exalt thyself because of it; but rather rejoice in something safer and more gracious, rejoice that thy name is written in heaven, if so it be.

This joy, again, however good our work may be, is to be moderated, because *it does not prove that we are any more gracious than others of far less gift and usefulness*. Did you notice in the chapter which precedes my text, that nine of the apostles attempted to cast out a devil from a lunatic child, but were unable to accomplish it, so that they said to the Master, "Why could not we cast him out?" The majority of the sacred conclave of apostles failed to cast out a devil, and yet seventy inferior persons all return with joy, and say, "Lord, even the spirits are subject unto us." Do you draw the inference, therefore, that the seventy were superior to the apostles? If you do, you have made a very grand mistake, for they were by no means so: and it would be a very great pity for any person who has been made useful in the kingdom of God to infer that he is therefore better than those whose earnest labours are crowned by no such apparent results. An obscure child of God whose name has never been mentioned in the church may yet be more worthy than we are. Of all estimates of ourselves, that which it founded upon

our apparent usefulness is likely to be most deceptive, Go to, sir, if thou consider thyself to be somewhat because thou hast wrought wonders. I will show thee the choicest of my Master's children on sick beds, I will show thee the richest and rarest piety connected with illiterate poverty, I will find thee a man who could not speak a sentence grammatically, who lives in the very bosom of Christ, and will put thee to the blush for the depth and power of his vital godliness. I will find thee one who shines as a precious jewel in Jehovah's sight, compared with whom thou art a poor dull pebble, and yet thou art highly esteemed, and he has little honour. His prayers have been of a thousand times more use to the church than thy preaching: yea, it may be that thy preaching has owed its success to his prayers. We cannot judge character by gift. He who hath one talent, and uses it well, shall have better acceptance at the last than he who hath five talents and useth them ill; and he who fills his circle, though that circle be small, shall have far more comfort therein than he who with a vast field hath nevertheless left the major part of it altogether untilled. Great importance in the public mind is no argument of great grace; a man is none the worthier for being successful; the best may not be the most prosperous. Boast not thyself, O fisherman, because thy net is filled, for as good men as thou art have toiled all the night and taken nothing.

Again, this joy in success needs to be kept under tight rein because *it is not an abiding joy*. If thou, O man, rejoice to-day because of subject devils, what wilt thou do to-morrow, when the devils break loose again? If thou returnest from thy labour full of success, and rejoicest, what wilt thou do when another time thou wilt have to plough the thankless rock and break the ploughshare? What if thy Master should send thee where there will be no response to thine invitation? What if he should send thee among Samaritans who will not even hear thee, and thou shalt have to go from city to city and wipe off the dust of thy feet against them? What if thou shouldst meet a child possessed of a devil and find that thou canst not cast out the evil spirit, because this kind goeth not out except with prayer and fasting? Why, man, thou wilt be sorely depressed then, and thy courage will fail. If thou hast fed thy soul upon such light bread as apparent success, it will enfeeble thee, and what wilt thou do when thy prosperity wanes? Thou wilt not have steadfastness enough to go on under discouragement, and thou wilt shun thy Lord's service. This will be ill indeed! O for a faith that is nourished on something better than appearances—a faith which does not live on gift or influence, or present success, but sustains itself upon the unfulfilling promise of the ever blessed God. This is what we need.

Once again, this joy, if we were to be filled with it to overflowing, would be found *unable to bear the strain of trial, trouble, temptation, and especially of death*. Take the last: will any man when he lies dying be able to console himself with the reflection, "I have testified of Christ to others"? Will he not need some other confidence? Will he not require something far more personal? Will this be the sweet morsel that shall stay the hunger of his soul? What if he had power over devils; may not devils yet obtain power over him? Will he be able to cheer himself amidst death's chilly waves with this boast—"I was a loud talker and a mighty professor, and the cause of Christ grew

under my leadership"? Nay, in such times as that we shall want surer consolations and diviner stays than these. Unhappy will he be who has accustomed himself to live upon the excitement of crowded meetings, or upon the laudatory criticisms of friends. Gifts, attainments, labours, successes, all heaped together, cannot support a soul on the verge of eternity. There is ever present the fact that such things are no sure sign of regeneration. Did not the sons of the Pharisees cast out devils? Did not the people say of Simon Magus, "This man is the great power of God"? Yet these were graceless deceivers. We must have sure evidence of the new birth, we must know that our citizenship is in heaven, we must know that we belong to Jesus, in one word, we must know that our names are written in heaven, or else we shall find ourselves utterly undone in our dying hours. For all these reasons, then, be not too elated, because of devils conquered, crowds gathered, or souls saved; but hearken to your Lord's voice while he points you to other reasons for rejoicing.

II. So now we come, secondly, to consider THE JOY WHICH NEEDS EXCITING. "Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." I am glad, my brethren, that this is the joy in which we may indulge to the full, because it is one in which *all the saints may unite* and take their share. If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, my dear brother, though thou canst do but little for him, thou mayest rejoice that thy name is written in heaven. Herein the bedridden sister may rejoice! herein the incurably diseased may exult. The child of God, whose tongue is silenced by infirmity, and whose conflicts with devils are confined to his closet and his chamber, may come in and say, "I, too, can rejoice that my name is written in heaven." Have you never remarked how our aged friends always delight to sing—

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes."

They do so because experience has led them to dwell much on the joy of having their names written in heaven.

The joy which our Lord commends is one which *springs from faith*, while the other joy arises alone from sight. A man can see that he has gifts, he can see that he has power and influence, he can see that he has success; but rest assured that every joy which comes to believers through the sight of the eyes is a doubtful joy. It is a dainty of which we must eat in scanty measure. Hast thou found such honey as this? eat not too much of it lest it sicken thee. But the joy caused by our names being written in heaven comes of faith, for eye hath not seen the record, neither hath any angel read it to us, and only because we believe in Jesus are we assured thereof: for this reason the joy grows in a good soil and is in itself safe. All the joys of faith are safe as the water which flowed from the smitten rock, no poisonous streams can ever issue from that source. This joy is a heavenly manna whereof a man may eat according to his eating, and let his soul be satiated. This is healthy meat which breeds no plague in the camp as the eating of the quails did, for the quails were sent in wrath to satisfy their fierce desires.

We never hear of men dying of eating the manna which came down from heaven, but they did die through eating quails, which were food for their lusts. Be it thine to get as much as ever thou canst of the joys of faith, and especially of this—"Rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

This joy consists in knowing our election; "knowing, dearly beloved, your election of God," knowing that your names were written in heaven from before the foundation of the world. Oh, what an inconceivable delight is this! To be God's choice is the choicest of delights. The joy of having your name written in heaven includes the joy of knowing that you are precious to the Lord, for it is written, "a book of remembrance was kept for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name, and they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels." To be written in heaven means that we are precious in the sight of the Lord, that he has noted us down in the list of his crown jewels, and will preserve us for himself till the day in which all his sacred regalia shall be complete. Blessed are those who stand recorded in the inventory of heaven's jewel-house.

To be written in heaven means that you claim the right of citizenship in the New Jerusalem, "the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven." Just as there is a roll kept by great cities in which they inscribe the names of citizens, so do we rejoice that our names are written in the roll of the city above, and that henceforth our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus. This is a broad subject for rejoicing, for it includes priceless privileges and honours more than royal.

We also rejoice that our names are written, that is, known and published in heaven. Paul mentioned certain of his fellow servants of whom he said, "whose names are written in heaven": as much as to say though they have neither fame nor honour here they have a perpetual record where honour is worth receiving, namely, before the throne of God. The heavenly writing signifies that we are part and parcel of Christ's new kingdom, we are inscribed among his soldiers, we are commissioned to bear hardness for his sake. We are written in heaven among the friends of Jesus, we are accounted as of the sacred brotherhood. In the great book of the divine Fatherhood, we are numbered among the children, and henceforth we shall be regarded and treated as belonging to the one family in heaven and in earth. This is the matter concerning which we are called to rejoice. "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

I see in this fact abundant cause for joy, but I cannot stay this morning to bring it out in detail. I would have you joy in the great grace which first inscribed your name in God's eternal book. Oh, bless the sovereign, distinguishing, discriminating grace which wrote down your unworthy name, where there might have stood the name of a king, or of an emperor, or the name of a person of great repute, of superior talent, or of great eloquence and learning. Instead of those which men esteem to be great names there stands your common-place name: therefore give the grace of God all the glory evermore.

And then rejoice in the grace which has kept your name inscribed in that heavenly roll, so that over you that ancient threatening of the law

has had no power—"Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." Exodus xxxii. 33. But hitherto you have stood among those of whom the Spirit speaketh expressly in the book of the Revelation—"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." There stands your name recorded still in the Lamb's book of life, though many a tear of yours might well fall upon it to think what grace it is which keeps it there and will keep it there for ever. A name among God's sons and daughters is better for you than if your name were in Debrett's Peerage, or in the Royal Almanack de Gotha. Being in the book of life it guarantees to you peace, joy, security, blessedness now, and secures to you a place hereafter amongst the blood-washed host in the "many mansions," which Christ hath gone to prepare for those whom his Father hath given him. Sit down now, beloved, and let your soul triumph to the last degree of joy in this—your names are written in heaven. Forget the falling devils for awhile, forget your abilities, forget your successes; cast these all at your Redeemer's feet, where they ought to be, and then take this to yourself as your joy, your portion, your heaven below, that your name is written in the family register of the Eternal. May the Holy Spirit inspire thee with this sublime delight.

Brethren, *this is a joy which can be cultivated.* How are we to cultivate it? If we desire to have much of this joy we must make the fact sure. We must be certain that our names are written in heaven, or else we cannot rejoice in it. Let your faith grow until it reaches the full assurance of faith, and then shall you rejoice that your names are written in heaven. "How am I to know it?" saith one. Well, friend, one thing is sure, if God hath written thee down among those who are saved thou canst soon know it, because thou art saved. If thou art forgiven, thy name is written among the forgiven. If thou art indeed quickened and made alive, thy name is written amongst the living in Zion. I will not invite you to go further and peer into that which is unrevealed, for if I did so I should be as much out of my sphere as those are who pretend to bring men messages from the spirit-world. The Lord gives not to any soul dead in sin the least right to believe that it is written among the living, neither gives he to any ungodly man the liberty to hope that he is written among the elect of God. We must have evidence, not dreams and airy suppositions; and the evidence of being written in heaven is that a man has been called by grace out of the world to follow Jesus. We see our election by our calling, and not else. We may know what is written about us in heaven by that which is written within us on earth. If grace has written upon thy heart till thou art "an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men," thy name is in his secret book. If thou art trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ thou art his, and the Lord knoweth them that are his, and hath written them down in his own private tablets which he carries in his bosom. If thy name be amongst true believers on earth it is amongst the redeemed in heaven: thou needst not question that, for the declarations of Scripture put it beyond a doubt.

If thou wouldst rejoice in thy name's being written in heaven, not

only be assured of the fact, but meditate much upon it. Let this be frequently in thy mind, "My name is written in heaven: beneath the name of my Lord the Lamb it is inscribed. I am one of his redeemed, and he writes me down among his dearly purchased property. He knows me, looks upon me, and regards me as his treasure. I am not my own, I am bought with a price, I belong to him," Go, brother, and exult in this, and let the sweet influence of it upon thy life be daily seen; for this joy, dear friend, *will make thee set very loose by everything else on earth.* What if thou be rich! rejoice not in this, for riches take to themselves wings and fly away, but rather rejoice because thy name is written in heaven. If thou be a man of learning thank God for thy knowledge, and use it for his glory: but, nevertheless, rejoice not in this, for what is earthly knowledge often but learned ignorance? "Rather rejoice because thy name is written in heaven." If thou be a person of position in the church, thank God if thou mayest glorify him thereby; but rather rejoice because your name is written in heaven. Are you strong and in good health, be grateful for the privilege; but rather rejoice because your name is written in heaven.

Turn this inspired text round another way, and if you have any sorrow, or if you mourn the absence of any earthly good, do not lament too bitterly; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. You are poor. Well, be not despondent, for your name is written in heaven. You are despised, and your name is cast out as evil, but rejoice none the less, for it is written in heaven. You have but few gifts and abilities, but your name is written in heaven. You could not stand up and edify a multitude, but your name is written in heaven. When you die your departure will make but a small gap in the church's ranks, but your name is written in heaven.

Whatever you lack or whatever you suffer, let this console you, and at the same time *let it strengthen you for service.* The joy of the Lord is your strength, you will feel able to go forward in God's work when you can boldly say, "My name is written in heaven. I may well serve him who has so graciously redeemed me: he has put me down among his people, why should I not therefore expect him to be with me when I go upon his errands and attempt to win him glory? My name is written in heaven, and therefore I will live for him to the utmost of my strength, and spend and be spent for his name." There seems to me to be such a wonderful moral and spiritual power about this joy in having one's name written in heaven, that it does not require me to explain why the Saviour encourages you to indulge in it. It is a corrective to the other joy, but it has about it also independently of that so many admirable uses that we need not add a word by way of guarding it, or restraining it, but may, on the contrary, earnestly invite you to partake of it without stint. Eat the fat and drink the sweet; rejoice, yea, rejoice abundantly; rejoice, and yet again rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

III. Now, lastly, into this joy the Saviour enters, and we have to look in the third place to THE JOY OF THE LORD IN SYMPATHY with it, and so we add to our text the first sentence of the 21st verse:—"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." Why did he rejoice? I think it was with a very same joy that he bids us cultivate as far as it related to himself, for you see he rejoiced because *grace was given.* He said, "I

thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." It makes Christ's heart glad to think that God has been gracious to the sons of men; to think that he has plucked some of the race out of the horrible pit, and lifted them up from the miry clay, and brought them out of darkness into his marvellous light. It makes his very soul glad to see that sin has been overcome in many men, and that many have been renewed in the spirit of their minds by divine grace.

Jesus was also glad at *the Father's choice*. He said, "I thank thee, O Father." He looks at these seventy babes out of whose mouth he has ordained strength, and he says, "I thank thee, O Father, for having chosen these." They looked a wretched regiment to conquer the world with, did they not? A company of fishermen and peasants, men of the lower order. If a man had to shake the world he might naturally wish for choice spirits, the *élite*, the aristocracy of thought, at any rate, if not the aristocracy of gold and silver. He might wish to select the refined, the noble, the educated for his great enterprise. But Jesus Christ is perfectly satisfied with his Father's choice. It has given me intense joy sometimes to think that our dear Saviour is perfectly satisfied to think that his Father should have chosen *me*. He is not like Hiram, who, when King Solomon gave him certain cities, was discontented with them, but our Lord has never spoken a word against any of the sheep his Father gave him, nor has he despised any of the elect ones whom the Father has put into his hand. He is perfectly content with you, beloved, perfectly satisfied that you should be chosen, though you are not one of the wise and prudent; that you should be chosen, though you are like one of the "base things of this world." Jesus rejoiced, and thanked the Father because of the choice which his sovereign grace has made.

Notice the spirit in which Jesus puts his thanksgiving,—he is satisfied with the choice *because it is God's choice*. "Even so, Father," said he "for so it seemed good in thy sight." That is the true spirit of Christ, to be content with what God wills because God wills it,—he has no questionings, no judgings, but shows an entire submission, nay an intense delight, in the august will of God. Let us, also, delight ourselves this morning in the fact that our names are written in heaven because God willed them to be there. How well satisfied we ought to be with that will, but how much more joyous may we be because Christ also is content with that will, by which we are given to him that we may be his people.

Then our Saviour went on to rejoice *because the grace of God given to us has revealed to us Christ, and revealed to us the Father*, for he says, "no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Now, the grace of God has manifested itself to you and to me, beloved in Christ, by revealing the Father, whom we now inwardly and truly know. We can say in our very souls, "Our Father which art in heaven." And we also know the Son. We cannot tell to others all we know of him, all the secret fellowships we have had, and into what deep communion we have entered, but we know Christ and are known of him, and this is

our life's work to go on to know him yet more and more, and to know the Father in him.

Jesus exulted because *there was a fellowship about all this*, for he speaks of his knowing the Father and the Father knowing him, and then of our knowing the Father because the Son has revealed him unto us,—all of which implies a wondrous communication and communion with the Father and with the Son. Now, this, I take it, is the cream of joy, a joy in which Christ partakes as he has fellowship with the Father and with us, and of which we partake as we have fellowship with him and with the Father. Now, mark, there is nothing of this in “*Lord*,” even the devils are subject unto us”: there is nothing of this when we merely have success in soul-winning.

A man may work marvels, and yet have no fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and hence he may lack that which is the essence, the centre point, the focus of all true joy. But he who has his name written in heaven has had the Father revealed to him through the Son, and in this he may exceedingly rejoice, for the very news of this is what kings and prophets waited for and found not: this is that which even angels desire to look into, therefore brethren rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.

My last word is for those who know nothing about their names being written in heaven. I would like to turn the text upon you for a second or so, for it has a dark side to you, and I pray God that as you see it you may tremble and fly to Christ. Whatever you have in this world, sinner, you have nothing worth rejoicing in, because you cannot say your name is written in heaven. Rejoice neither in your wealth, your health, your children, your prosperity, your position, your success, for if your name be not written in heaven, Ichabod is written over all your choicest possessions. As you look on all that you have gained, remember that God can make your souls to hunger and faint even in the midst of all these things. Listen to the thunder of that dreadful sentence, “I will curse your blessings.” “The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the righteous.” Oh that your names may be written in heaven for his mercy's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke ix. 51—62;
x. 1—24.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 22ND, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

[The Tabernacle was on this night thrown open to strangers, all the regular congregation kindly vacating their seats.]

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—Matthew xi. 28—30.

OUR Lord had just been declaring the doctrine of election, thanking the heavenly Father that he had chosen babes, though he had passed by the wise and prudent. It is very instructive that, close upon the heels of that mysterious doctrine, should come the gracious invitation of my text: as much as if the Lord Jesus would say to his disciples, “Let no views of predestination ever keep you back from proclaiming fully my gospel to every creature;” and as if he would say to the unconverted, “Do not be discouraged by the doctrine of election. Never let it be a stumbling-block in your way, for when my lips have said, ‘I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes,’ I also proceed to speak to you in the deepest sincerity of heart and say, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’”

I shall notice at the outset who it is that makes so large a promise and gives so free an invitation. There are many quack doctors in the world, and each one of these cries up his own medicine. Who is this man who calls us so earnestly and promises rest so confidently? Is he an impostor too? Will he play us false? Does he boast beyond his ability? Ah, it cannot be thought so; for this man, this marvellous man, who promises rest to those who come to him, is also God. He is the Son of the Highest as well as the son of Mary, he is Son of the Eternal as well as Son of man: and he has power because of his divine nature to accomplish whatever he promises to perform. As a man, the Lord Jesus

was noted for his truthfulness. From his lips never fell an equivocation. He never boasted beyond his ability, or led men to expect from him what he could not render. Why should he deceive? He had no selfish end to serve or ambition to gratify. Did he not come to tell men the truth? It was his errand, and he did it thoroughly. Believe him, then. As you are persuaded of the truthfulness of his character accept his teaching; and as you believe in his deity—if so you do believe, and I trust you do—believe in his ability to save, and at once trust your soul in his hands. If he be a mere pretender, do not come to him; but if indeed you believe my Lord and Master to be faithful and true, I beseech you attend at once to his call.

Where is he now? He is not here, for he is risen; but since he spake these words he has lost no power to save, but in a certain sense has gained in ability: for since he uttered those words he has died the death of the cross, by which he obtained power to put away the sins of men; he has also risen from the grave, no more to die, and he has gone up into the glory with all power given unto him in heaven and in earth. He is King of kings and Lord of lords; and it is in his name and by his authority that we proclaim to you the gospel of Christ, according to his words, recorded by the evangelist Mark: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." It is an enthroned Redeemer who to-night invites you. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them; therefore doubt not his power to save you, but come to him at once and find rest unto your souls.

Jesus being the speaker, and his authority and ability being both clear, we shall now come to dissect the words, and may God grant that as we do so the Spirit of God may use every syllable, and press the truth home upon our hearts.

And, first, I notice here *a character which*, dear friend, I think *describes you*—the labouring and the heavy laden. Secondly, I notice *a blessing which invites you*—"I will give you rest." Thirdly, I notice *a direction which will guide you*—"Come unto me: take my yoke upon you: learn of me." And, fourthly, I notice *an argument which I trust may persuade you*—"I am meek and lowly in heart. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

I. First, then, here is a character which, no doubt, describes a considerable number of those here assembled—"ALL YE THAT LABOUR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN."

The words look as if there were a great many such persons—"all ye"; and, indeed, so there are, for labouring and burden-bearing are the common lot of the sons of Adam. Labourers and loaded ones constitute the great mass of mankind, and the Lord Jesus invites them all without exception; high or low, learned or illiterate, moral or depraved, old or young—"all that labour and are heavy laden" are comprehended in his call. Some have ventured to say that this describes a certain *spiritual* character, but I fail to see any word to mark the spirituality of the persons; certainly I see not a syllable to limit the text to that sense. Brethren and sisters, it is not our wont either to add to or to take from

the word of God knowingly, and as there is no indication here that these words are to be limited in their meaning, we shall not dare to invent a limit. Where God puts no bolt or bar, woe unto those who shall set up barriers of their own. We shall read our text in the broadest conceivable sense, for it is most like the spirit of the gospel to do so. It says—"all ye that labour," and if you labour, it includes you. It says—"all ye that are heavy laden," and if you are heavy laden it includes you, and God forbid that we should shut you out. Nay, God be thanked that no man can shut you out if ye be willing and obedient, and come to Christ, accepting his invitation and obeying his command.

To you, then, do we speak, "all ye that labour." Ho, ye who work so hard to earn a crust that your limbs are weary with your daily toil, come ye to Jesus, and if he give you no rest to your bodies, yet to your souls he will. Yea, even for your physical toil he is your best hope, for his righteous and loving teaching will yet alter the constitution of the body politic, till the day shall come when no man shall need to toil excessively to earn his share of the common food which the great Father gives for all his creatures. If ever rest from oppression and from excessive labour shall become the joyful lot of mankind, it will be found when the Son of David shall reign from pole to pole, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

But hither come ye, ye that labour with mental labour—ye that are straining your minds and exhausting your spirits, ye who pine and pant after repose for your souls, but find it not! Perhaps you are labouring to enter into rest by formal religion—trying to save yourselves by rites and ceremonies—by attendance on this service and on that, making your life a pious slavery, that you may find *salvation* by the outward ordinances of worship. There is no salvation there. Ye weary yourselves with searching for a shadow. You seek for the living among the dead. Wherefore spend ye your labour for that which satisfieth not? Turn ye your thoughts another way. If ye come to Christ ye shall cease from the bondage of an external and formal religion, and shall find a finished righteousness, and a complete salvation ready to your hand.

O you that are trying by your good works to save yourselves, and doing no good works all the while; for how can that be good which you do with the sole view of benefiting yourselves? That selfish virtue which only seeks its own—is that virtue? Can that commend itself to God? But I know how you wear your fingers to the bone to spin a garment of your own righteousness, which, if it were spun, would be no more substantial than a spider's web, and no more lasting than the fading autumn leaves. Why do ye not cease from this fruitless toil? O you that hope for salvation by the works of the law, it is to you that Jesus speaks; and he says, "Come to me, and I will give you rest." And he can do it, too. He can at once give you a spotless righteousness: he can array you from head to foot with the garments of salvation. On the spot he can give you both of these, and so give you rest, ye labouring ones.

Some of you are labouring after *happiness*. You think to find it in gain—hoarding up your pence and your pounds and seeking for rest in the abundance of your beloved wealth. Ah, you will never have enough till you get Christ; but when you have him, you will be full

to the brim. Contentment is the peculiar jewel of the beloved of the Lord Jesus. All the Indies could not fill a human heart: the soul is insatiable till it finds the Saviour, and then it leans on his bosom and enters into perfect peace.

Perhaps, young man, you are labouring after *fame*. You despise gold, but you pant to obtain a great name. Alas, ambition's ways are very weary, and he who climbs the loftiest peak of honour finds that it is a slippery place, where rest is quite unknown. Young brother, take a friend's advice and care no longer for man's praise, for it is mere wind. If thou wouldst rise to a great name, become a Christian, for the name of Christ is the name above every name; and it is bliss to be hidden beneath it, and overshadowed by it. Christ will not make thee great among men, but he will make thee so little in thine own esteem that the lowest place at his table will more than satisfy thee. He will give thee rest from that delirious dream of ambition, and yet fire thee with a higher ambition than ever.

What is it you are labouring for? Is it after *knowledge*? I commend you: it is a good possession and a choice treasure. Search for it as for silver. But all the knowledge that is to be had from the zenith to the centre of the earth will never satisfy your understanding, till you know Christ and are found in him. He can give rest to your soul in that respect by giving thee the knowledge of God and a sense of his love.

Whatever it is thou labourest after, come thou to Jesus, and he will give thee rest.

But the text speaks of some as "*heavy laden*." They are not merely struggling and striving, but they are burdened. They have a load to carry, and it is to these that Jesus says, "I will give you rest." Some carry a load of *sin*. I mean not all of you. Some of you think, perhaps, that you have no sin; but there are others who know that they have sinned; in the memory of the past they are full of fear, and looking, in the present, to their own condition and position, they feel uneasy and unhappy. Their grief has nothing to do with the house or with the barn, it is with their own selves that their burden begins and ends. "I have sinned," say they, "and how can I be forgiven?" This is the load they carry. Some carry a load of *sorrow* on the back of this load of sin—a daily fretting, worrying sorrow, from which they cannot escape: to such Jesus beckons, and he says, "I will take your sin from you, forgive you, and make you whiter than snow. I will take your sorrow from you too, or, if the sorrow abide with you, I will make you so content to bear it, that you shall thank God for the cross that you carry and glory in your infirmity because the power of Christ doth rest upon you." Loaded, then, with sin or sorrow, come to Jesus and he will give you rest.

Or, possibly, the load may be that of *daily care*. You are continually crying, "What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" Oh what heavy hearts tread our streets! How many are scantily fed and scarcely clothed! What myriads go down Cheapside unhappy because they can see no provision for their commonest wants! Even to these Jesus says, "Come to me, and I will give you rest." He teaches the sweet art of casting our care on him who careth for us. He shows us that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by

every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live." He has a way of making us content with little, till a dinner of herbs with his grace to season it becomes a greater dainty than the stalled ox of the rich man. Come ye to him, ye poverty-stricken, and he will teach you the science of joying and rejoicing under all circumstances. Even in a cottage with scanty comfort he will give you rest and true riches.

Or, the burden may happen to be one of *doubt*. You perhaps feel as if you could believe nothing, and are uncertain about everything. This also is a crushing load to a thoughtful spirit. I, too, know what that means, for I have seen the firm mountains of my youth moved from their foundations and cast into a sea of questioning. I, too, have been loaded down with difficulties and scepticisms. From that burden I am delivered, for in that day in which I believed in Jesus—the man, the God—and cast myself at his dear feet to be his servant and believe his words and trust in him, then did the reeling earth stand fast, and heaven no longer fled away. I saw Jesus, and in him I found the pole of faith, the basis of belief. Believe in Jesus, and you will meet with a blessed rest of mind and thought, such as earth cannot afford elsewhere—a rest that shall be the prelude to the everlasting rest in heaven, where they know even as they are known.

So Jesus cries aloud to-night, to you who labour and to you who are loaded down with mighty burdens; he cries, and I beseech you have regard to the cry. Are you weary of life, young man? Christ will give you a new life, and teach you how to rejoice in him always. Are you disappointed? Has the world given you a slap in the face where you looked for a kiss? Come to my Lord. He will give new hopes that shall never be disappointed, for he that believeth in him shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end. Are you vexed with everybody, and most of all with yourself? Jesus can teach you love, and put you at your ease again. Does something fret and tease you from day to day? Come to my Master, and the vexations of the world shall gail you no longer. You shall reckon that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in you. Do you despair? Are you ready to fling yourself away? Do you wish that there was no hereafter? And, if you were sure there would be none, would you speedily make your own quietus? Would you afford short shrift to your soul, and end this mortal life at once? Ah! do not so: there are brighter days before you, since Jesus has met you, and new life will begin if you will come to my Master and sit at his feet. I will give you a hymn to sing, which shall grow sweeter every day you live:—

"Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away:
He taught me how to watch and pray,
And live rejoicing every day.
Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away."

I have spoken enough upon the character, which, I think, comprehends many here,—“All ye that labour and are heavy laden.” I know

how well it suited me once upon a time, and how glad I was to answer to the call of the text.

II. Now, secondly, the text speaks of A BLESSING WHICH INVITES YOU. "Come unto me," says Jesus, "and I will give you rest." "Rest! rest! rest!" I could keep on ringing that silver bell all the evening—"Rest! rest! REST!" "Ye gentlemen of England who live at home at ease," ye scarcely know the music of that word. The sons of toil, the mariners tossed upon the sea, the warriors in the battle, the men who labour deep in the mines—these know, as you do not, how sweet this music sounds. Rest! Rest! Rest! Rest for the weary body is the outward emblem of that inward blessing which Jesus Christ holds up to-night before the eyes of all labouring and heavy-laden souls. Rest—rest which he will give, which he will give at once—rest to the *conscience*. The conscience, tossed to and fro under a sense of sin, has no peace; but when Jesus is revealed as bleeding and suffering in the sinner's stead, and making full atonement for human guilt, then the conscience grows quiet. As Noah's dove lighted upon the ark, so conscience lights on Christ, and rests there for ever. No sin of yours shall trouble you when you have seen how it troubled Christ, how he took it on his shoulders and bore it up to the cross, and then flung it into the depths of the sea, never to be mentioned against you any more for ever.

Jesus gives rest to the *mind* as well as to the conscience. As I have said, the mind wanders to and fro, in endless mazes lost. It must believe something, but it knows not what. He who is the greatest unbeliever, generally believes the most; only he believes a lie. Incredulity and credulity are strangely near of kin; for he that believes not in God generally believes in himself, or believes in whatever his own dreams may shape: but he that taketh Christ, and resteth upon him, finds his mind no more disturbed: his thoughts rest, his judgment becomes satisfied, his brain is quiet.

Rest to the *heart*, too, is given by Jesus. Oh, there are choice and tender spirits in this world that want, above all things, something to love; these too often choose an earthly object, and lean on that reed till it breaks or turns into a piercing spear. O hearts that pine for love, here is a Beloved for you whom ye may love as much as ye will or can, and yet never be guilty of idolatry, nor ever meet with treachery. O broken heart, he will heal thee! O tender heart, he will delight thee! The love of Jesus is the wine of heaven, and he that drinks it is filled with bliss. Jesus can give rest to the palpitating heart. Ye sons of desolation, hasten hither! Daughters of despondency, gather to this call!

He can give rest, too, to *your energies*. O ye whose unabated strength seeks a worthy field of labour, do ye enquire, what shall we pursue? You want to be up and doing, but you have not found an object worthy of you. Oh, but if you follow after Jesus, and, in the love of God and in the love of man, cast aside selfishness, desiring only to be obedient to the great Father's will and to bring your fellow men into a gracious state, then shall ye find a noble and restful life. If ye be willing to give up life itself for God's glory as Jesus did—for you cannot well be his disciple if you do not, then shall ye find perfect rest unto your souls.

As for your *fears and forecasts* which now are troubled—he will turn them into hopes of endless glory. Dark forebodings of a future, you

know not what—the sound of an awful sea, whose surf beats upon an invisible shore, and whose billows resound with sound of storm and everlasting tempest—from all this you shall be delivered. Jesus will give you rest from every fear. If ye will come to Jesus ye shall obtain rest in all ways, the rest of your entire manhood, rest such as shall unload you of your burdens and ease you of your labours: this is the rest which Jesus promises to you.

“Alas,” cries one, “I wish I could attain to rest. That is the one thing needful to me; I should then become strong and happy; my mind would become clear, and I should be able to fight the battle of life, if I could but obtain rest.” Yea, but you cannot have it unless you come to Christ. Not heaven itself could give you peace apart from Christ, nor can the grave’s deep slumbers rest you unless you sleep in him. Rest! Neither heaven nor earth, nor sea and hades, none of them can afford you any trace of it until you come to the incarnate God, Christ Jesus, and bow at his feet. Then ye shall find rest to your souls, but not till then.

III. This brings me, next, to say that the text presents A DIRECTION TO GUIDE EVERY LABOURING AND LADEN SOUL IN THE PURSUIT OF REST. I shall be sure to have your very deep attention to the directions which Jesus gives, for you all want to find rest. Oh, may the divine Spirit now lead you into the way of peace. If you follow our Lord’s directions and do not find rest, then his word is not true. But his word is true. I invite you to try it, and urge you at once to accept his guidance and leadership.

The first direction is, “*Come unto me.*” “Come unto me,” said he, “and I will give you rest.” Mark, it is not coming to a sacrament, coming to a church, or coming to a doctrine: it is coming to a *person* which is set before you—“*Come unto me.*” You are to come to God in human flesh, the Deity himself dwelling among us, and taking our nature upon himself. You are to come to *him*. He does not bid you do anything or bring anything, he does not command you to prepare yourself, or advise you to wait; but he bids you come—come as you are—come now—come alone—come to him and to him only. Nobody here needs me to say that we cannot go to Christ, as to bodily going, for in his own actual person he is in heaven, and we are here below. The coming to him is mental and spiritual. Just as we may come in spirit to some great poet whom we never saw, or approach some renowned teacher whose voice we have never heard, so may we come in thought, in meditation, to Jesus, whom our eyes have never beheld. We are to come to him in some such fashion as the following words describe:—“I believe what God has revealed concerning thee, O thou wondrous person, that thou art God and man. I believe that thou hast died for human sin. I believe that thou art able to save, and I think of thee and meditate upon thee daily: I do believe thee to be the Saviour, and I trust thee to save me. I am troubled, and thou sayest, ‘I will give thee rest.’ I trust thee to give me peace, and I mean to follow thy directions till I find it. I ask thee to give me thy Spirit that I may enter into thy rest. As much as lieth in me I come to thee: oh, draw me while I come. Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief.”

Now, mark, it is not merely to his teaching, or to his commandments,

or to his church that you are to approach : it is to *himself* that you are to come ; not merely to reading the Scriptures or to offering prayer, for if you put your trust in reading the Bible, or in a prayer, you have stopped short of the true basis of salvation. It is to *him*—a real person—a man and yet God—one who died and yet ever liveth, that you must draw near. You are to trust him. The more you know of him by the reading of his Word, the better you will be able to come : but, still, it is neither Bible reading, nor praying, nor chapel-going, nor church-going, nor anything else that you can do that will save you, unless you come to HIM. This you can do if you are on the sea where the Sabbath bell never sounds. This you can do in a desert where there are no meetings of God's people. This you can do on the sick bed when you cannot stir a limb. You can go to Jesus by the help of his blessed Spirit, and you can say, "Lord, I believe in thee."

Well, that is the first thing, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

The next command is, "*Take my yoke upon you.*" "Come," and then "take"; that is to say, no man is saved by merely trusting himself with Christ, unless that trusting be of a living and practical kind. I sometimes explain this to my people as I will explain it to you. A celebrated doctor visits you when you are very ill, and he says to you, "Do you trust me?" You reply, "Yes, sir, wholly." "Well," says he, "if you trust me completely, and give your case over into my hands, I believe that I shall see you through this sickness." You assure him of your implicit faith in him and then he begins to question you. "What do you eat?" He lifts up his hands in horror, and he exclaims, "Why, my good man, you eat the very thing which feeds your complaint; you must not touch that any more, however much you like it; you must have simpler food, and more harmless diet." "Then," says he, "I will send you a little medicine, which you will take every three hours, according to the prescription. You are sure you trust me?" "Yes." "Then all will be well." He comes in a few days, and he says. "You seem worse, my friend. I fear that your disease has taken a stronger hold upon you than before. I do not understand how matters have taken this turn. Are you trusting me?" "Yes, doctor, trusting you entirely." "Well, what have you been eating?" And then you tell him that you have been eating just what you used to eat, and you have broken all his rules as to food. "Now," he says, "I see why you are worse. You are not trusting me. Have you regularly taken my medicine?" He looks at the bottle upon the table. "Why, you have not taken a single dose!" "No, sir, I tasted it and I did not like it, and so I left it alone." "How is this?" says the doctor, very much grieved, "my friend, you said that you trusted me implicitly?" "Yes, sir, so I do." "But I say you do not," says he, "and I will leave you. I insist upon it that I will not be responsible for your health if you mock me with such a pretended faith; for if you did believe me you would have done as I told you." Now, Jesus Christ never sent me, or any other minister, to preach to you and say, "Only believe, and you may live as you like, and yet be saved." Such preaching would be a lie. It is true that we say, "*only believe*," but that "*only believing*" must be such a believing that you do what Jesus bids you;

for Jesus has not promised to save you *in* your sins, but *from* your sins, just as a physician does not pretend to heal a man while he feeds his disease and refuses the remedy, but only promises that he will benefit him if the faith which he expects him to exercise shows itself to be a practical and real faith. Beware of a liar's faith; and that is a liar's faith which you pretend to get at a revival meeting, if you then go and live just as you did before.

"Faith must obey her Maker's will,

As well as trust his grace.

A gracious God is jealous still,

For his own holiness."

So Christ says, "Take my yoke": that is, "If you will be saved by me I must be your Master, and you must be my servant; you cannot have me for a Saviour if you do not accept me for a Lawgiver and Commander. If you will not do as I bid you, neither shall you find rest to your souls."

Then there is a third direction; and I pray you notice each one of these words; for failure about any one of them may cause you to miss peace. I remember when I was seeking the Lord, that before I came to peace I was made willing to be or to do anything the Lord Jesus chose to bid me do or be. Are you in such a state? Then listen, for Jesus says, "*Learn of me*"; that is to say, at first you do not know all his will, and perhaps you will do wrong; but then that will be in ignorance, and he will graciously wink at your fault. But he says, "Be my disciple; be my scholar; come and learn at my feet." Christ will not be your Saviour if he is not to be your teacher. He will teach you very much at first, and a great deal more as you go on; and it is essential to your salvation that you have a teachable spirit even as a little child. You must be willing to drink in what Christ pours out for you. The promise is to those who are willing to become learners. This is the gospel, but it is not often preached as it should be: "Go ye into all the world, and *disciple* all nations," or "make disciples of all nations." Now, what are disciples but learners? You must be willing to be a learner, and say, "As I learn I will do, and as I am taught I will practise, trusting thee, O Jesus, to save me all the while. Not trusting to my doing or my learning, but trusting alone to thee; yea, both doing and learning because I do trust thee. Because thou art all my hope, therefore will I do as thou biddest me, if thou, O Lord, wilt help me." Come, young men, I am glad to see so many of you present here this evening. It is a good thing that you bear Christ's yoke in your youth. You must have some master, you know, and you will either be your own master, and you cannot have a worse; or you will get the devil for your master, or you will get the world for a master, and either of these will make dreadful drudges of you. But if you take Christ for a master, oh, then it is that you will find him to be your Saviour, and you shall enter at once into rest, and that rest will grow; for, if you notice, my text first says, "I will *give* you rest"; and then it says, "you shall *find* rest"; that is to say, you shall find for yourselves a deeper and profounder enjoyment of life as you understand more fully the divine will and obtain more grace to put it into practice.

This is the sum and substance of the gospel. Yield thee, sinner, yield thee; yield thee to Jesus. O ye proud sinners, come and bow before my Lord. Down with your weapons of rebellion; lower the crest of your pride; unbuckle the harness of your self-glorying; and say, "Jesus, Master, only save me from the guilt and power of sin, and I will bless thee for ever and ever, and rejoice to obey thee as long as I live."

Now, what I have said is no make-up of mine. I have not altered my Master's conditions, or imported anything into the text that is not there. There it stands. "Come unto me: take my yoke upon you, and learn of me."

IV. Now the last thing—and I will not detain you much longer, is THE ARGUMENT TO PERSUADE YOU SO TO DO. And that argument is this: First, *the Master you are to serve is "meek and lowly in heart."* I confess there are some men whom I could not serve; proud, austere, domineering, one might sooner eat his flesh from the bone, than serve such tyrants. There have been despots in the world whom to serve was degradation; but when you look at Jesus Christ, whose whole being is love, gentleness, meekness, lowliness, oh, there are some of us who feel that his shoe latches we are not worthy to unloose. We would count it heaven to be permitted to kiss his feet, or wash them with our tears, for he is such a glorious one that his beauty attracts us to him, he holds us spell-bound by his wondrous character, and we count it no slavery, but perfect liberty, to wear his yoke and carry his cross.

Have you never heard how he has been served by his disciples? Why, man, they have given up their lives for him gladly! Let Bonner's Coalhole and the Lollards' Tower and the stakes that stood at Smithfield tell how men have loved him. So loved him that they sang in the dark dungeon, and made it light with their joys; and clapped their hands in the fires, glad to be consumed that they might bear testimony for him! Have you never heard of old Polycarp, when they bid him deny his Master, saying, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me a displeasure, how can I now blaspheme my King that saved me?" Oh, he has bred such enthusiasm in his followers that neither the gridiron of St. Lawrence nor the wild bulls of Blandina have been able to prevent the saints from glorying in his name. They would have gone through hell itself to serve him, if it had been possible; for his love has had such power over them. Whatever we have to suffer for him he suffers with us. Alexander was a great master of men, and one of the reasons why all his soldiers loved him so enthusiastically was that, if they were upon a long march, Alexander did not ride, but tramped along in the heat and dust with the common soldiery; and when the day was hot, and they brought his majesty water, he put it aside, and said, "The sick soldiers want it more than I, I will not drink till every soldier has a draught." So is it with Christ, in all our afflictions he is afflicted, and he will not have joy until he gives joy to his people. Yea, he has done more than Alexander, for he emptied himself of all his glories, and gave himself to die upon the cross, and consummated the redemption of his people by his own agonies. Who would not follow one whose footprints show that he was crucified for his followers? Who would not rally to

his banner, when you see that his hand which upholds it was pierced with nails, that he might redeem us from hell? On which of his disciples has he ever looked unkindly. Which of his redeemed has he ever cast away? To which of those that love him has he ever been unjust or ungenerous? Therefore I charge you all—and all his saints speak in me while I speak—take his yoke upon you, and learn of him, for he is meek and lowly in heart.

In the last place, *that which Christ asks you to do is no hard thing.* As he is not severe himself, so his commands are not hard, for he says, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." True there are some things which you now delight in of which Christ will say, "Have no more to do with them"; but he will only forbid you that which injures you, and he will put something better in their place. He may call you to duties which will try you; but, then, he will give you such consolations that they will cease to be trials. In fact, the difficulties of following Christ are delightful to his hearty followers. They love difficulties, that they may show the sincerity of their confidence in their leader. Oh, my beloved friends, the service of the Lord Jesus Christ is no bondage. There are no chains to wear; there are no prisons to lie in; or, if there be any, they are not of his making, but are the devices of his enemies: Christ's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. He calls you to that which is right, true, honest, loving, tender, heavenly. Who would not be willing to be called to this? He asks you only to give up that which is evil and displeasing in his sight, degrading to your own mind, and which stops the channels of peace and happiness to your soul.

Above all, it is no hard thing, surely, to believe in him. "Oh," says one, "that is just the point. Sometimes I cannot feel that Christ could forgive me." No, and do you know why? It is because you do not think enough of *him*, and think too much of yourself. If you sit down and think of your sin, you will soon feel as if pardon were impossible; but, when you *turn* and think of *him*, you will see at once how readily he is able to forgive. There is a homely illustration which I often use, and as I cannot think of a better, I must use it now. If you were to go to-morrow up and down London, right along from end to end, there would be quite a journey for you. Twelve, fourteen, fifteen, perhaps twenty miles you could go, and scarcely see a break in the houses. I would have you traverse the main roads and then go down the cross streets, lanes, alleys, and courts. After you had had a day of it you would say, "Dear, dear me, what a mass of people! how do they live?" And if you were nervous you might very soon come to feel, "I am afraid one of these days London will be starved. Here are nearly four millions of people! Lebanon would not be sufficient to find them cattle, nor Carmel and Sharon to supply them with sheep, for a single week. They will certainly be starved." I can imagine your becoming seriously apprehensive of a famine. Well, then, next Monday morning, we will have a fast horse, and we will go up to Copenhagen Fields, and see the live cattle; and then we will drive to Smithfield, and see the carcases; and next we will go round to the markets, and see where the fish and the vegetables are sold; and when we have finished our tour of observation—which will take us at least two or three hours

early in the morning; as you get out of the Hansom cab, I know what you will say to me, you will change your tone and say, "I am no longer afraid of the people's starving, but I am more afraid of the meat being wasted; I cannot think where all the people come from to eat all this. I am astonished to see such a mass of food. I should not wonder if tons of it should be spoiled. There cannot be people enough to eat it all." Your mind has suffered that sudden change, because you have changed your point of consideration. So now, if you think of sin, sin will seem a monstrous thing that never can be put away, and when you have reached that point it is time to think of the blood which cleanses us from it. Do think of sin till it bows you down, but do not think of it so as to despair. Turn your eye to Calvary's bloody tree, and see there the Son of God, in agonies of body and soul, pouring out his life for sinners. May the Holy Spirit give you a quick eye for the sufferings of Jesus. Oh, I have sometimes looked at Christ in that way till I have said, "The sin of a *world* might readily be put away so! Ay, Master, and if every star that decks the heavens were a world, and every world were as full of sinners as this earth is, yet, surely, no grander redemption for them all would be wanted than thy august sacrifice, O mighty Son of God!" John Hyatt, when he lay dying, was asked by one of his friends, "Mr. Hyatt, can you trust Jesus with your soul now?" and the good man answered, "Trust him with *one* soul? I could trust him with a million souls, if I had them." That is how I feel when I think of the death of my Lord Jesus, and it is what I want you who are troubled in spirit to feel. As you see him wounded, bleeding, dying, on the cursed tree, sinners, may you find your hearts believing that he suffered thus for you, and, as you do believe it, you will find rest unto your souls.

May God give that rest to every one of you to-night, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xi. 15—30.

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AND WHY NOT?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 12TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it."—Luke xvii. 22.

WHILE the Lord was yet on earth the days of the Son of man were but lightly esteemed. The Pharisees spoke of them with a sneer, and demanded when the kingdom of God should come. As much as to say, "Is this the coming of thy promised kingdom? Are these fishermen and peasants thy courtiers? Are these the days for which prophets and kings waited so long?" "Yes," Jesus tells them, "these are the very days. The kingdom of God is set up within men's hearts and is among you even now; and the time will come when you will wish for these days back again, and even those who best appreciate them shall ere long confess that they thought too little of them, and sigh in their hearts for their return." This suggests the remark that *we are bad judges of our present experiences*. Those days of which we think very little while they were passing over us come by-and-by to be remembered with great regret. Have you not found it so in your own lives? Has it not been so that the very experience which caused you anxiety while you were passing through it has afterwards appeared to be so excellent in your eyes that you have wished to have it back again? I have said unto my soul sometimes, "How heavy thou art! How art thou bowed down! How little dost thou rejoice in the Lord! It is sad that thou shouldst fall into this condition." The period of heaviness has passed away, and then I have chided my heart in another way, saying, "Soul, how careless and unfeeling thou art! It were better for thee if thou wert as heavy now as thou wast a little while ago; for then thou wast in earnest, then thou wast driven to mighty and prevailing prayer, but now thou art steeped in lethargy, thou hast lost thy fervency, and art scarcely alive at all!" This stage has gone by, and I have again had to look back, and feel that when I thought myself insensible I was really very spiritual and sensitive, and that my fears

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of falling into carnal ease were sure proofs that I was carefully upon the watch. Thus are we delivered from carnal security by being made to see more beauty in past experiences than in those now passing over us. Holy anxiety when it broods over us is often mistaken for unbelief; full assurance is suspected to be presumption, and joy is doubted and stinted for fear it should be pride and self-deception. When our spiritual spring is with us we are fearful of its March winds and April showers; but when it is gone, and we are parched with summer heat, we wish we had the winds and showers back again. So, too, when autumn comes, we mistake ripening for decaying, and mournfully wish the roses of summer would return: while all through winter we are sighing for those summer hours we once enjoyed, and those mellow autumn fruits which were so sweet to our taste. Thus, brethren, we continue, if we permit ourselves to do so, to judge each state in which we have been to be better than that in which we are, and to shed useless tears of regret over times and seasons which are gone past recall. While they are with us we see their deficiencies: when they are gone we remember only their excellencies. It were wiser if we took each time and season, and state and experience, while yet it was on the wing, turned it to the best account for God's glory, and rejoiced in its mercy while we enjoyed it. While we have the light let us walk in it. While the Bridegroom is with us let us keep the feast; it will be time enough to mourn when he is gone from us. After all, each season has its fruits, and it were a pity to wither them with idle regrets. Let us turn to good account the old worlding's motto, and live while we live. Let us live one day at a time, enjoy the present good, and leave yesterday with our pardoning God. The days of the Son of man, of which the apostles thought comparatively little, they afterwards sighed for, and these present days, of which we are complaining, may yet come to be regarded as among the choicest portions of our lives.

Our second remark is a very commonplace one, you have heard it a thousand times—*we seldom value our mercies till we lose them*. We best appreciate their excellence when we have to deplore their absence. This has been so often said that I wish it did not continue to be true, for it is an atrocious piece of folly that, after all, we should be obliged to lose our blessings in order to learn gratitude for them. Are we such dolts that we never shall know better than this? Such conduct is only worthy of the idiot or the insane! Can we not put away such childishness, and thus remove one occasion for our sorrows. Would it not be well to resolve, in God's strength, to estimate the blessing while we have it, and so to use it that when it is gone we may remember that we turned it to the best account for our soul's profit, for the benefit of others, and for God's glory. We cannot call back the sun and lengthen out these shortening days, but we can at least so live that every flying hour shall carry with it tidings of our zealous industry in our Master's cause. Come, dear brethren, whatever in our present condition is good, let us bless God for it now, and use at once its peculiar opportunities and advantages, lest haply in some future day we should rue our foolish neglect, and desire too late to see more of such days.

This morning, as the Holy Spirit may help me, I intend to use the text, first, by explaining its *immediate interpretation*; then, secondly, by giving an *interpretation adapted to believers at the present day*: and then,

thirdly, by urging home *another interpretation*, much after the same import, *adapted to unbelievers at this time*.

I. First, let us consider THE IMMEDIATE INTERPRETATION of our text. The first meaning ought always to have the preference in every discourse. We must always mind the mind of the Spirit. Did not our Saviour mean two things, first, that the day would come in which his disciples would look back upon the past regretfully, wishing that they could have him walking among them again; and, secondly, that they would look forward to the future anxiously, wishing that they might, if it were only for one day, behold him in his glory, enthroned in power, as he shall be in the latter days, when he shall stand a second time upon the earth. Looking either backward or forward, the one thing they sighed for was to have their Lord personally and visibly with them.

First, then, I say, our Lord meant that *they would look back regretfully upon the days when he was with them*. In a short time his words were true enough, for sorrows came thick and threefold. At first they began to preach with uncommon vigour, and the Spirit of God was upon them; so that thousands were converted in a single day. Then they saw how expedient it was that their Lord should go, and that the Spirit should be given. Persecution, however, soon arose and they were scattered abroad; and many of them, doubtless, mourned those quieter days when their Lord's presence shielded them. Still, in all their scattering, the power of the Spirit rested upon them, and they increased and multiplied, and the joy of the Lord was their strength. But by-and-by the love of many waxed cold, and their first zeal declined; persecution increased in its intensity, and the timid shrank away from them; evil doers and evil teachers came into the church; heresies and schisms began to divide the body of Christ, and dark days of lukewarmness and halfheartedness covered them. In such circumstances many and many a time did the true servant of Christ say, "O for an hour of the Lord Jesus! O for one of the days of the Son of man, when the arm of the Lord was revealed among us! O that we might go to him and tell him all our case, and ask his guidance, and entreat him to put forth his power." I can imagine that all the first generation, and the next, and the next, after our Lord had ascended, had often upon their lips the sigh, "Would to God we could see one of the days of the Son of man! Oh, where is he that trod the sea, and made the waves of the lake of Galilee lie still at his feet? Oh, where is he that chased the demons, and met our foes at every point?" They must often have felt a strong desire to see one of those grand days of miracle when even the devils were subject unto them. It has often occurred to us to desire the same. Though it is now eighteen hundred years ago and more since the Lord went into his glory, and though he has given us the blessed Spirit to abide with us in his stead, yet have we fondly wished, but wished in vain, that we could for one day at least see him healing the sick and raising the dead. See here, the scoffers tell us that God lives not, or that if there be a God he has no influence in this world, but has laid aside his power, and handed it over to certain rigid laws with which he has nothing to do. Oh, if we could have the Incarnate God

among us but for a day, to work his wonders of grace, to feed the hungry, to open blind eyes, to unstop deaf ears, to make the lame man leap like a hart, and cause the tongue of the dumb to sing! Have you not desired it? Your desire will not be gratified. "Ye shall not see it." It would not be of much service if you did see it. It could only happen in one place upon any one day, and you who already believe would be confirmed by what you saw, but not so unbelievers. We should only have to begin a new battle with infidels, who would as readily deny that which happened to-day as that which happened a thousand years ago. Only those who saw the miracle would ever believe that it occurred, and a large proportion of these would begin to say, "This was probably done by sleight of hand," or they would ascribe it to magnetism, or electricity, or some newly-discovered force. Miracles will not convince when men are resolved to disbelieve. Faith is not born of sight, nor can it be nourished thereby. It is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, and we err if we believe that even Christ's bodily presence and the repetition of his miracles would be of any value. He who believes not Moses and the prophets, neither would he believe though he were to be dazzled with miracles. The kind of faith which merely outward signs would produce would not be the faith of God's elect.

Then, too, we have been wearied with fierce disputing upon this doctrine and upon that, and one has said "This is the Master's mind," and another has said "Nay." One teacher has denounced his fellow, and has been answered by an excommunication from his opponent. In these controversies have we not wished that we could go to Jesus with all questions and say "Master, give us one infallible word, untie or cut these knots with one word of thy lips. Then will thy poor Church be no longer disquieted with debates." Brethren, Jesus is not here. Instead of his presence we have that of his Spirit, and though you may wish for his bodily presence, it would not be of much service to you in the matter for which you desire it; for, strange to say, if our Lord were to speak again, men would begin to dispute to-morrow about what he meant to-day, even as they now quarrel over his words of eighteen hundred years ago. His language in this Book is already so very plain that I do not know, if he were to speak again, that he could speak more clearly than he has done. At any rate, his hearers said of him in the days of his sojourn here, "Never man spake like this man," and I suppose if he were to speak again he would not improve upon what he has already spoken, nor would he teach us much more. For us to hear him speaking again, would only be to create a new departure for a fresh set of controversies, and we should have among us the Old School Christians, and the Christians of the later revelation, which would double the confusion and make bad worse. No, my brethren, we need the Holy Spirit to enlighten us as to what our Lord has already spoken, but it is idle to wish that he would teach among us again. We ignorantly desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, but divine providence kindly denies us our wish, and tells us plainly, "Ye shall not see it."

"Ah," but you have said, "Only to see our blessed Lord once! Just to cast eyes upon his beloved person for a moment, to hear but once the tones of his heart-moving voice! Oh, if I might but once unloose his sandals or kiss his feet, how would my spirit feel confidence and joy all

her days! How would faith grow if she could but have a little actual and intimate intercourse with the Well-beloved. I would fain give all that I have for one glance of his eyes." I know you have indulged that thought, for I have often had it myself; but dear brother, if the Lord Jesus were to come upon earth, I am not sure that you could have much of his company, because there are so many of his people, and each one would wish to entertain him. He could, as a man, be but in one place at one time, and you might get to see him perhaps once in the year, but what would you do all the rest of the year, when you might not be able to hear his voice because he would be in America or in Australia? How much the better off would you be? Surely none at all. It is better far for you to continue to say, "Whom not having seen we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The fact is, brothers and sisters, the great battle of the Lord has to be fought out upon the lines of faith, and for us to see with the eyes would spoil it all. That sight of the eyes and hearing with the ears which we desire, just to break the monotony of the walk of faith, would in fact spoil it all, and amount to a virtual defeat. Our God is saying to us, "My children, can ye trust me? Can you obtain the blessing of those who have not seen and yet have believed? Abraham trusted me, but he heard me speak with an audible voice; Moses trusted me, but he saw my wonders in Egypt and in the wilderness; can ye trust me without voice or miracle?" The Lord has spoken to us by his Son, who is better than all voices or wonders. Can we now believe him? Is the spiritual life within us strong enough to believe the Lord without any further evidence? Can we honour him by resting upon his sure word without seeing signs or wonders? We, upon whom the ends of the earth have come are set to work out the great problem of defeating the powers of darkness and walking throughout an entire life by simple, undiluted faith: can we accomplish it? By the Spirit's help we can. I beseech you, brethren, say unto the Lord, "Lord, increase our faith, and grant that we may so trust thee that from henceforth we may neither ask for sight nor sound, nor aught else that would prevent our resting on thy bare word." Ye have fallen into that mistaken condition, and wished for one of the days of the Son of man, but ye shall not have it, for your heavenly Father hath reserved some better thing for you, that you to the end, with simple, unalloyed faith in him, should endure and conquer through the blood and the power of your unseen Redeemer, who is really with you though you see him not.

Our second reading of the text was that these disciples would *look forward sometimes with anxious expectation*. "If we cannot go back," they would say, "Oh that he would hurry on and quickly bring us the predicted era of triumph and joy. Oh for one of the days of the glory of the Son of man!" They would fain have a drop of the glory before the shower of the millennium. They would hear one blast of his trumpet before it shall sound to raise the dead, and see one flash of the eternal morning before whose dawning the shadows shall for ever flee away. Have you not sometimes desired the same? I know when I stood at the foot of the so-called Holy Staircase at Rome and saw the poor deluded creatures crawling up and down the steps, in hopes of ob-

taining remission of sins by their prayers, I wished the Lord would flash forth his power a moment upon those horrible priests who had degraded their people by such superstition. One of the days of the Son of man with the scourge of small cords would effect a great change in the Church of Rome, but one of the days of the Son of man with the iron rod would be better, for there are plenty of potter's vessels around the Vatican that need dashing to shivers. Our indignation would anticipate the judgment and put a speedy end to antichrist. We long to see the millstone dashed into the flood from the angel's hand, never to rise again. In all this indignant impatience there is much that needs repressing. Our Lord says to us, "My children, what have I to do with you? mine hour is not yet come." We know not what spirit we are of, for in reality we are wanting to give up the battle on the present lines, and see it fought out in another way: or, in other words, we consent to a defeat, so far as faith goes, and would console ourselves with victory obtained in another manner.

Suppose we wish for one of the days of the Son of man to break down the idols of the heathen and the images of the Papists, to overthrow all systems of error, and to establish straight away by force of omnipotence the kingdom of Christ: now, if our wish could be granted, what would it all amount to? It would only manifest what is clear enough already, namely, the power of God in the world of matter; but it would not prove his greatness in the moral and the spiritual worlds. If you will think of it awhile you will see that the omnipotence of God is not the question. It is clear that any act of power can be performed by the Lord at once. He could, beyond all doubt, in a moment confound his enemies and utterly destroy their errors by crushing the advocates of them. But that is not the point. The question is—can the force of love and truth by the gospel of Jesus win men's hearts? Can Christ in his people conquer sin, and falsehood, and hatred, by purely spiritual means? Can sinful creatures, such as we are, continue faithful to God under temptation and allurements? Will God by the feeble instrumentality of men and women living and teaching the gospel of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, which is a purely spiritual power, be able to break down the works of Satan, abolish the false gods, scatter infidelity and antichrist, and establish the kingdom of grace, and peace, and righteousness? Do you not see, brethren, that to invoke the interference of mere power is to spoil the experiment? The glory of the latter days befits the period of triumph, but not the time of conflict. To snatch from the future a day of its splendours would be to alter the conditions of the great fight, and so to accept a defeat. The result is safe enough; the battle is the Lord's and he will win; and therefore do not let us give way to these misplaced pinings and longings.

"Ah," says one, "I wish he would come now and divide the sheep from the goats." Why? Are not the sinners better among the saints for awhile, that the gospel may the more easily reach them? Remember, also, that the husbandman would not have the tares divided from the wheat till the harvest came. "Oh, but we wish the Lord would come and put an end to sin." Is it not better that his longsuffering should patiently wait, calling men to repentance and culling out his own elect from the sons of men throughout many a generation? The

waiting is dreary to you, but it is not long nor dreary to his infinite patience. "Oh, but this delay is tedious, and infidels are demanding, 'Where is the promise of his coming?'" Brethren, of what consequence is it what unbelievers say? Are heaven's affairs to be arranged to meet their foolish gibes? "He that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh; the Lord doth have them in derision." Would it not be better for you also to scorn their scorning? Who are they that we should be afraid of their revilings? "Ah," say you, "but error has so long prevailed, and it grows worse and worse." What if it does? It shall still be overruled for the Lord's glory. God is on the throne yet. He is in no hurry. Remember the infinite leisure of the Eternal. What would a million million ages be to him? Truly he comes quickly, but you must not read that "*quickly*" after your rendering, for "*quickly*" with him may be slowly enough for us. We cannot measure the paces of the Infinite, for the whole history of man is but a pin's point to his eternity. Our judgments of Jehovah's going forth are sure to err: he *walketh*, we are told, upon the wings of the wind,—he is only walking when he moves as swiftly as the tempest. We may as readily err upon the other side, and think him slow when in reality he rideth upon a cherub and doth fly. A thousand years to him are as one day, and one day with him is as a thousand years. No, we will not beseech the Lord as yet to divide the sinners from the saints by his infallible voice: we will not expect him yet to say, "Depart, ye cursed," and, "Come, ye blessed": we will not beg him at once to display his great power, and to put down all the principalities of evil with his rod of iron. We will wait on, and fear not. Faith is now the watchword and the order of the day. Sight is for unbelievers, but patient trust is for the saints. This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith. This it is which glorifieth God, and overthroweth the powers of evil. Believe, and so shall you wax valiant in fight and put to flight the armies of the aliens. Believe, and so shall you be established. Ask not to see, for sight is wisely denied you. Heaven will be the brighter, and eternity the more glorious, because we hope for that we see not, and do with patience wait for it.

II. Secondly, I am going to give with much solemn earnestness AN ADAPTED INTERPRETATION SUITABLE TO BELIEVERS AT THIS PRESENT MOMENT. "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it," that is to say, first, I call our *days of holy fellowship with Jesus* days of the Son of man, and these may pass away to our deep sorrow. We have known days when our faith in Christ has been strong and realising, and our hearts have drawn very near to him. Our ears have not heard him speak, and yet he has spoken into our soul; our eyes have not seen him, and yet our heart has been ravished with his beauties. Oh, the delights, the heavenly joys which we have then experienced. . . Perhaps I speak to some who are experiencing all that bliss at this present time, and this has lasted with them for months, perhaps for years. Happy brothers! happy sisters! to abide in such a state of mind as this! But cast not aside my word of jealous counsel this morning, for I speak in purest love. Take heed lest the day come when ye shall desire to have one of these days again and not see it. While the Beloved is with you hold him, and do not let him go. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and

by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awake my love until he please." Remember, the Lord Jesus is a jealous Saviour. He will depart if he finds you love any earthly thing more than himself: he will hide himself if you begin to pride yourself upon your graces, and think that surely you must be someone or else your Lord would not so sweetly reveal himself to you. He will up and away also if you grow cold and negligent, if you despise the means of grace, and especially if you decline in private prayer, and if his word shall become a dry bone to you. Ah, when the Lord is gone what a vacuum remains in the soul. It is the best thing I can say for it:—I hope that the dreary vacuum will be mourned over and lamented; I hope that the heart will never rest till Jesus returns, but mourn and lament.

"Where is the blessedness I knew
In union with my Lord?
Where is my heart's refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?"

But, beloved, the Lord Jesus need not go, and ye need not depart. He will abide with you even as he did with the disciples at Emmanus when they constrained him, if you are but eager for his company. He will pitch his tent with you, and be no more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home; only take heed that ye grieve him not by sin. He will remain with you till the day break and the shadows flee away, and you shall evermore abide in his love, and your soul be filled with his joy. But take ye the kindly warning of this morning, for if you walk loosely, carnally, carelessly, proudly, forgetfully, the days shall come when ye shall wish for one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

Turn the text another way, and learn again. Beloved friends, we have enjoyed days of delightful *fellowship with one another* as well as with our Lord. In the days of the Son of man the disciples were so united in heart that when he had ascended "they were all with one accord in one place." Now, it is a great joy to believers when we are all knit together in love, and when Christian brotherhood is a matter of fact and not of mere talk. Those are blessed days when the family circle is gracious, when husband and wife and children can speak together of the things of God, and there is no division or coldness at home. Those are happy times when your bosom friends are Christ's bosom friends, when those with whom you talk familiarly hold converse with God. It is no small bliss to go up to the house of God in company with those who keep holy day, and to feel that they are of one mind with us in the things of God. Happy is it also for us when in the church there is undivided fellowship in prayer, when everybody seems to be in a praying frame of mind; when there is fellowship in praise, and eyes glance joy to eyes with a delight that is common because of the Lord's blessing; when there is fellowship and agreement, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one Spirit is in all and upon all. Those are indeed the days of the Son of man. Something like this we have known for years; these days have been common with us. Brethren, I hope we shall never know the loss of them, but we easily may. The church may soon allow her fellowship to be broken. And how? Why, some do a world of mischief in this matter by denying

that there is any fellowship at all, and asserting that love and zeal have died out. Did I hear a brother say that there is very little Christian love now-a-days? You are a very good judge of yourself, brother, for remember you are speaking for yourself. Another says, "Oh, Christian fellowship; I never see any." Very likely, brother; again I say you are speaking for yourself, and you are the gentleman who is likely to put an end to anything like fellowship in others by your acid spirit and bitter talk. In other ways also joyful fellowship may be wounded. Let there be a want of holy walking, a lack of zeal, or an absence of humility; let there arise in the Church the desire in each one to be the greatest, and let there be small care about the glory of God, let every man become proud and lifted up, and there will soon be an end of Christian fellowship. Do you, dear brother, neglect private prayer, and become as cold as an iceberg, and wherever you go you will chill other people, and there will be frosts wherever you are found. It is one of the easiest things in the world, when the devil and a knot of prejudiced people agree about it, to spoil the fellowship of the saints; but if we labour that love may be promoted and increased, we shall not have to sigh for the days of the Son of man without finding them, but they shall be continued to us all our lives.

Again, certain times may be aptly called the days of the Son of man when there is *abundant life and power present in the church of God*. We know what this means in this Church, I wish we knew it more fully; and we know what the contrast means by having observed many dead and decaying churches. What wretched communities some churches are, where the soul of religion is absent. There is a company of people called a Christian church, and a man called a minister who gives them a pious essay every Sunday morning, and they go in and out, and go home, and there is an end of the whole thing: meanwhile their neighbours are perishing for lack of knowledge, but they care nothing, the heathen are dying without Christ, but they heed it not. So much is given to the cause of God as must be paid out of sheer necessity for the maintenance of outward ordinances, but there is no zeal, no consecration, no fervour of love. May we never come down to this. O my beloved, I long to see among us yet more and more abundantly the spirit of divine life, energetic life, fervent, self-denying life, life which consumes everything to achieve God's glory. Beloved, ye have this and may have more of it, but ye may also lose it. Life and power may soon depart; pastor and people may alike sleep in spiritual sloth, and then at such times, the power having gone from the church, its energy is no longer felt among the unconverted. A living church grasps with a hundred hands all that comes near to it; it is a mighty soul-saving institution, which with its far-reaching nets draws thousands from the sea of death. A living church attracts even the Sabbath-breaker, and arouses the infidel. It startles those whom it does not save. When the church is in this state her converts are plenteous; then her teaching and preaching are with power, and truth pushes down its adversaries. I have been in my inmost soul bowed before the Lord with awful dread lest these days of the Son of man which we have enjoyed in great measure so long should be taken away from us. I tremble lest we should go to sleep, and do nothing: I am alarmed lest there should be no conversions, and nobody

caring that there should be any, and yet everything seeming to be prosperous. I know that people may be growing more respectable, and appearing to be more pious than ever they were, and yet everything may be going back. God forbid that the dry rot of indifference should seize upon the heart of the church while she yet appears to be sound and strong. Before that occurs may God be pleased to take me home. Many of you wish the same for yourselves, and well you may, for I trust that we have too long lived in the atmosphere of zeal to be able to endure the cold, frigid condition of a careless church. Yet it would soon be our lot if the Spirit of God were withdrawn. O Holy Ghost, do not depart from us! While his power is with us, brethren, let us be all at it, and always at it, with our whole souls serving the Lord Jesus, and so the cloud of blessing shall be long detained.

Again, "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man." This may be true with regard to a *powerful ministry*, for in the days of the Son of man the gospel was faithfully preached by Christ, and his apostles and evangelists. It is not for me to exalt mine office, if by that I be supposed to imply any exaltation of myself, but still I believe that to any church and people an earnest, plain, simple, faithful ministry is a blessing of untold value. Yet the Lord may readily take it away from his church, or he may paralyze its power so that it may no longer be a blessing. This you well know. The Lord may in anger take the candlestick out of its place, and then what would happen? Death may silence the earnest tongue, and there will be mourning then. He who was a spiritual nursing father, and a leader in Israel, may be removed, and what then? Are we sufficiently thankful for ministers and pastors while we have them? Are not many of the faithful taken away because they have never been valued as they ought to have been? God's servants are precious in his sight, and he would not have us despise them.

It may be that in this land of ours in years to come gospel ministers will become scarce enough. If the popery which now abounds in the Church of England is to go on increasing the day may come when the voice of Christian ministry will be silenced by law, and persecution allowed to rage; for, be not deceived, Rome has not changed her views; and let her once get power again, all the penal laws will be re-enacted, and you Protestants who are to-day flinging away your liberties as dirt cheap will rue the day in which ye allowed the old chains to be fitted upon your wrists. Popery fettered and slew our sires, and yet we are making it the national religion. Or if it should never come to be a matter of law that ministries should be silenced, yet they may become fewer and fewer, till a little child may write them. We have none too many faithful ministers of Christ even now, but even these may be called away. The Lord may say to this guilty people, "Ye did not hear them while ye had them; behold, I will call back my prophets and my messengers. Ye did not regard them when they cried morning and noon and night unto you, and bade you lay hold on Jesus Christ and be saved, and therefore behold I will remove your teachers and take them away from you, and ye shall not see their faces any more." Are you prepared for this? What are Sabbaths to some Christians I know of but days of bitter disappointment?

They go to their places of worship as a matter of duty, but they are not fed, nor comforted, nor stirred up; they gather no divine encouragement, they find no influences in the ministry to help them on their way. Are there not hundreds of unedifying preachers and hundreds of congregations where the service of the Sabbath is a weariness and a misery? God grant you may never have to mourn and lament the happy days in which the gospel was preached among you in simplicity and earnestness. But remember, if they are not valued, they may speedily come to an end. Infirmities of body and frequent sicknesses are not only admonitions to the preacher but to his hearers also.

III. My last promise was to give A MEANING ADAPTED TO THE UNCONVERTED. To them let me say these two or three things. To some of you now present who have heard the gospel for years, and yet have rejected it, my text will one day become solemnly true. "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." Perhaps you will emigrate; you will wander into the backwoods of America or into the bush of Australia, where the sound of the church-going bell will never again reach you, where ministers and sermons and services will be unfamiliar things. Then it may be you will say, 'Would to God I had used my Sabbaths while I had them, and that I had constantly heard the gospel when I might.' Or if you should remain in England, yet in a certain time, shorter or longer, you will lie upon the bed of sickness; and it will become clear to all around that it is your last bed and your last sickness, and then you will begin to say, "O God, are there no more Sabbaths for me? no more preachings of the gospel for me? Oh, that I had them over again." Will you not then be willing to give all that you possess to be able once again to hear the voice of God's minister proclaiming pardon through the blood of Jesus? You know you will. At such a time it may be there will be an end to the emotions which you now occasionally feel, for oftentimes God's arrows do stick fast in your conscience, and you are wounded. There will be no arrows to wound you then with tender wounds of hopeful penitence, but remorse will tear you with poisoned fangs. You will be going down to hell filled with hardness of heart. Emotions which you aforetime quenched will not come back; you resisted the Spirit, and he will leave you to yourself; and yet there will be enough, perhaps, of conscience left to make you wish that you were again at some of those earnest meetings, that you could again feel as once you felt when you were almost persuaded to be a Christian. At such times, it may be, you will look back upon your mother's entreaties with great remorse, and wish she could be at your bedside to love you again, and weep over her dying child. "Ah," you will say, "would God mother could speak to me about Jesus as she once did, but she is gone now." And sisters and friends that once, you said, worried you about religion, you will wish for them also, but they are gone. They will never worry you any more with their psalm-singing! You will never be tired, and wearied, and bored with their entreaties any more, you may be sure about that, for they are in heaven, and you are dying without hope! You are going down to the grave now, and will never again have to complain of dull Sundays and

prosy ministers. You will not be annoyed with street-preachers and missionaries. No more warnings, no more entreaties, no more prayers, no more revival services. You are now passing into another region; I wonder whether you will be of a different mind towards these things from what you are now. Will you then remember my warnings, and call yourselves fools for rejecting them?

I am but giving you an outline of what I wanted to have said, and said with much more earnestness, but I do beseech you think over these things to yourself in the quiet of your room this afternoon. Within a short time there will be an end to all the opportunities and means of grace you now enjoy: within a short time at the very longest there will be an end of all exhortations, and invitations, and warnings, and entreaties, and it may be when they come to an end you will wish to have them back again. Would it not be far better that you should use them now? Escape thou and find life in Christ, for the lamp of life shall never be kindled again to give thee a second opportunity. While yet mercy's gate stands open, enter in and find eternal life, for if it be once shut it will never move upon its hinges again, but you shall be shut out world without end. God grant his blessing upon these feeble words, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xvii. 20—37;
xviii. 1—14.

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UNWILLINGNESS TO COME TO CHRIST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 2ND, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."—John v. 40.

OUR Lord was addressing himself to the unbelieving Jews. He told them that they had received abundant evidence of his being the sent one of God, but yet they had rejected him, and he solemnly charged this home upon their consciences. If you read the passage at home you will see that in the thirty-sixth verse he reminded them that he had received the witness of John, and all men believed John to be a prophet. He had come as the herald of Christ, the promised Elijah, and he had borne witness, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God; which taketh away the sin of the world." Yet this clear testimony they had despised, and trodden under foot.

Next, our Lord claimed that his miracles and life-work were a sufficient witness to his Messiahship. "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." There is, perhaps, no better evidence of the truth of our Saviour's mission than his character, life, and miracles. The truths which he revealed, the perfections which he displayed, and the wonders which he wrought, all went to show that he was, indeed, anointed of God, and sent to be the Saviour of men.

Further, our Lord informs them that there was more testimony still, though in that evidence many of them had not shared. He says, "The Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me." Three times out of the excellent glory had the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." This was good evidence, whether they had heard it or not, and though he tells them that they had neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape, yet others had heard that voice, and seen the descent of the Spirit like a dove, and their testimony ought to have had weight with them. To you, dear friends, assembled here to-night, this is a very important piece of evidence, we rejoice as

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we hear that God has actually spoken by audible sounds out of heaven, and borne testimony to his Son that he is the Christ.

Then our Lord goes on to say that there was yet another evidence in which the Jews had not shared—the unbelieving ones—and that is, the internal evidence which, to those who have it, is the very best in all the world. Internal evidence, the evidence of a renewed heart, the evidence of joy and peace, the evidence of conscious pardon, the evidence of sanctification, this is the most convincing of all evidence to those who possess it. It is clear as the sun in the heavens, but they had not shared in it, and therefore felt it not. “Ye have not his word abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.”

And then the Master reminds them that there was yet a fifth mode of evidence which demonstrated him to be the Christ, and that was the Scriptures, of which he says, (if I may read the text in the indicative, and I think it must be so read)—“Ye search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” Hence, if we will now forget the unbelieving Jews, and only think of unbelieving Gentiles, there are to us to-night evidences concerning the Lord Jesus of the most convincing character: there are John’s witness, the witness of the miracles, the witness of the voice of the Father out of heaven, the inner witness which many of our friends and kindred tell us of, and then the witness of the Holy Spirit in sacred Scripture. All these show that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Redeemer of man, that he is the appointed Mediator of the covenant of grace, and that through him there is immediate salvation for all who will believe on him.

The worst point about the whole conduct of the Jews was that, with all this witness in his favour, which they could not overturn, they would not come to him that they might have eternal life. At this moment there are many such unbelievers upon the face of the earth; and, what is more to the point, I fear, that at this hour, in this congregation, there are some who will not come unto Jesus that they may have life. There are persons in this great assembly, consisting as it does of individuals who have enough thought about religion to come out on a week-night to hear a sermon about it, who, nevertheless, will not come to Christ. Some of these persons are often here, familiar with these courts and familiar with this voice, perhaps so familiar that they have grown accustomed to it, and it has but little power with them; and yet though they will come to us they will not come to Christ. However, it is to them that I shall speak to-night, and I ask God’s people to pray that, while I am speaking, the Spirit of God may apply the word to the heart and to the conscience. I speak in great weakness and bodily pain, and therefore I hope to be aided and assisted by a double portion of the divine strength, and, if it be so, God’s glory will come of it.

Now, we shall notice, first of all, *the great plan of salvation*. Let us look at it: it is coming to Christ that we might have life. Secondly, I shall look, and ask you to look at, *your position towards it*—“Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” Then, thirdly, I shall dwell for a few minutes upon what will certainly be *the result of such conduct as this*. And, fourthly, before we have done, let us hope for

a change in your state of mind, so that before you sleep to-night it shall cease to be true of you that you will not come, and a joyful fact that you have come and found life eternal. Your immediate conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ shall be the great object of our discourse, and of the prayers which will go with it from the Lord's people here assembled.

I. First, then, the text very briefly sets forth THE PLAN OF SALVATION. Christ speaks of it thus, "Come to me that ye might have life." The way to be saved is to come to Christ. Christ is a person, a living person, full of power to save. He has not placed his salvation in sacraments, or books, or priests, but he has kept it in himself; and if you want to have it you must come to him. He is still the one source and fountain of eternal mercy. There is no getting it by going round about him, or only going near to him: you must come *to him*, actually *to him*, and there must be a personal contact established between the Lord Jesus and your spirit. Of course it cannot be a natural contact, for his body is in the heavens and we are here; but it must be a spiritual contact, by which your mind, heart, thought, shall come to Christ, and faith, like a hand, shall touch him spiritually, grasp him by believing upon him, and receive life and grace from his divine power. Just as when the woman of old touched his garment's hem, the virtue went out of him to her, and she was healed; so now, though he be yonder, faith's long hand can touch his divine and human person, by confiding, trusting, and resting in him, and so virtue will flow from him into our soul, and our mind shall be healed of whatsoever disease it hath.

Think, then, at this very moment, of Jesus Christ, who was once nailed to the cross and died as the sacrifice for sin. Think of him as sitting now at the right hand of God, even the Father, clothed with infinite majesty and might; and if you are enabled now to repose your heart upon him, to believe that he is able to save you, and, by an act of faith, to commit your soul into his keeping that he may save it, you have done what he bids you do: you have come to him, and he will not cast you out, but the blessings of his salvation shall be yours. This is the coming which he sets before you: the drawing near of the mind, the heart, the soul, to Jesus, so as to trust in him—to trust in him at once for all that your soul needs.

The text, when it says, "Come to me that ye might have life," implies that we are to come to Jesus Christ for everything; for life includes all that is absolutely needful for salvation, yea, salvation itself. It is the lowest stage of grace, and yet the term comprehends the very highest condition of the soul even when it enters into glory and enjoys life at the right hand of God. O sinner, by nature thou art dead in sin; and thou must be made alive or thou canst not dwell with God, for he is not the God of the dead but of the living. To be quickened thou must come into contact with him who is "the life," even Jesus; and if thou come to him thou hast begun to live. Thou art also condemned to die on account of thy breaches of the law. Thou art condemned already, for thou hast sinned against the most high God. If thou come to Christ, the mediator, the sentence against thee shall be removed. Thou shalt live, for "there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." As soon as the soul comes to

Christ it receives pardon and justification, and these twain remove from us the guilt which brought us under condemnation, and put upon us a righteousness which entitles us to stand before the most high God without fear, for "who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died."

Coming to Christ gives us actual spiritual life, and gives us also judicial life, so that we need not fear the axe of justice. Those cannot be condemned who are accepted in the Beloved, and all are thus accepted who have come to Christ. I will read you these two verses, as they certainly may be translated without the slightest violation of the original language. The text runs thus: "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me; but ye will not *come unto me* that ye might have life,"—as if to show you that there are many persons who seek life, and even think that they have it, and yet have not found it, because they stop short of Christ. They search the Scriptures, but they will not come to Jesus. Is it not, therefore, a good thing to search the Scriptures? Ay, that it is, and the more you search them the better; but still it is not *the* thing: it is not the saving work. You may be Bible readers and yet perish, but this can never happen if you come to Jesus by faith. I may put the same truth in another shape. Ye pray; some of you pray earnestly; but yet ye will not come unto Christ that ye might have life. Is it not a good thing to pray? Ay, indeed, a blessed thing to pray, but still it is not *the* thing; it is not the subject of the great saving command. The gospel precept is not, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that *searcheth the Scriptures and prayeth* shall be saved." Nay, but the gospel runneth thus: "He that *believeth and is baptized* shall be saved." There stands the healing touch—the act which brings us life: faith in the heart, and confession with the mouth. To these the promise is made, and of those who neglect these our Lord says, "ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

Now, observe that this way of coming to Christ, which is indicated in the text, is *the only way*. There are other preachings, but there is only one true ministry, and the true ministry beareth witness concerning Christ. There are other supposed ways of salvation, but they shall be accursed that preach them; and woe unto them in the last great day who have deluded men's souls with their "other gospels," for "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid—Jesus Christ the righteous." "Believe and live" is the one unchanging oracle, and he that hath regard to it shall find eternal life. But take heed that ye despise not him that speaketh from heaven this wondrous word, "for there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby ye must be saved." Come to Christ: come to the anointed Saviour; come to the Son of God; come to him who is both God and man; come to the Mediator; come to the Redeemer; come to the Great Substitute for sinners; come and trust him and you shall live. I have no other message for you. Do not reject it, for if you do you must perish without hope.

And this way, as it is the only one, blessed be God, is a *sure way and an open way*. Sure, for none ever tried it and failed. There lives no:

on earth—there lives not in hell—one soul that trusted in Christ and yet was not saved.

“There is life in a look at the Crucified One.
There is life at this moment *for thee*.”

Life in every instance. There has never yet been one that did confide alone in Jesus, that found faith to be useless, for faith is a living thing, and works by love, and purifies the soul, and saves the man through Jesus Christ.

And it is an open way as well as a sure one,—open to you to-night, dear friend. “Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend into heaven to bring Christ down? Or who shall descend into the deep to bring him up again from the dead? The word is nigh thee, on thy lip and in thy heart.” If thou wilt with thy heart believe in the Lord Jesus, and with thy mouth make confession of him, thou shalt be saved, even thou. The latter days have fallen upon us, the shades of the evening of the world and the damps of its autumn are all around us; but still there soundeth forth the cry, “Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.” Still is the fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

“Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”

Thus have I put, as plainly as I can, the plan of salvation. That is it, and that is all of it: it is to come to Christ. If I talked much longer I might darken, but I could scarcely make clearer, the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus. It is to come to Christ, to trust him, to obey him, to yield yourself to him, to love him: so to come to him as to cleave to him on earth and be with him for ever and ever.

II. Now, secondly, and very solemnly, I want to speak to you unconverted ones, who have heard the gospel a long time, about YOUR POSITION IN REFERENCE TO THIS PLAN OF SALVATION. “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.”

That describes your position, and I earnestly beseech you to look it in the face. I would have you get alone and say to yourself deliberately aloud, “*I will not* come unto him, that I might have life.” But you reply, “That would be an awful thing to say.” I know it would be, but it is a more awful thing to my mind not to dare to say it and yet practically to be doing it. Are you ashamed to say it and yet not ashamed to do it? I know there is a curious feeling about some men, that if the preacher openly rebukes a vice which they practise they find fault with him for even speaking of it, and they say that he ought not to allude to such vile things, while in these very sins they live from day to day. This is the hypocrisy and cant of sinners, and it is detestable. And so men will live in unbelief, but if you ask them to say decidedly, “I do not believe,” or to assert openly, “I will not come unto Christ that I may have life,” they think we must be as wicked as they are to ask them to say any such thing. Now, what you dare do, you will surely dare to say, or else what a coward

you are, and what a liar to your soul! If it is a right thing to do, it must be right to say. I do not ask you to go and proclaim it to others, to infect them with your disease, but I do ask you to say it *to yourself*—to label yourself as you are, and let it be distinctly understood by your own soul what you mean, and where your position is. I pray you act honestly and openly with your own heart. It surely cannot be wise to cheat yourself.

Ye will not come unto Jesus that ye might have life: we know this to be true of many of you, because you have not come. If you say it is not true that you will not come, then I reply, "How is it that you have not come?" If you have come, how readily do I withdraw the charge; with what joy and happiness do I bless the Lord that you have been led to his dear Son: but, if you have not come, dear friend—and you know yourself whether you have or not—then I cannot retract a syllable of the accusation, but I repeat the charge—you will not come unto him that you might have life. I know that you would rather put it another way, and you would say softly, "I cannot come." But this is flattering language: do you know what "cannot" in such a case means in Scripture? It means the same thing as "will not." If you had the will you would have the power, for, wherever there is the will, God has given it, and he does not give the will without giving the power. Though sometimes we have to cry out that "to will is present with us," but "how to perform that which we would we find not," yet that lasts not long. When the Lord gives the will he soon gives the way. His grace does not divide the two gifts, but the power comes with the will; and if you have the will to-night you have the power. That you cannot is true, but it is *only* true because you will not: your will is the seat of the weakness. I may say of a man that he cannot be chaste. Why? Because he will not be chaste; that is the only reason. I may say of another man that he cannot speak the truth. What do I mean by that? I mean that he is such a liar that he will not speak the truth. He could if he would, but there is the point: he will not. Our weakness to do good lies in the fact that our will itself is opposed to the right. "Ye *will not* come that ye might have life" is the true English of that excuse of yours, that you cannot. If you would you could. It is because you will not that you cannot.

But one of you will say, "It is not that I will not, but that I dare not, come to Jesus." Ah, my dear friend, but if you say "I dare not," I have to ask you on what grounds you support that remarkable fear. Dare not be saved? Dare not come to the Son of God whose very person is love? Dare not do what God commands you? for "this is his commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." Turn that "dare not" round the other way: it were much better used so—"I dare not *refuse* to come; I dare not tarry any longer; I dare not disbelieve; I dare not distrust, I dare not keep my sin and let my Saviour go." That is the true kind of "dare not," but the other is an idle excuse. How idle it must be for a man to say, "I dare not obey my God and trust in his Son," I leave your own consciences to judge. The truth is, "Ye will not come to Christ, that ye might have life."

Let me hold you now, and ask you to think for a few minutes of what

you are doing. Think of *the life* which you are spurning! There is no life for you anywhere but in Christ, and if you will not come unto him you will never have life: that is to say, you will not have that without which this poor existence of yours is only a lingering death. The grace which enables you to overcome sin, the joy which enables us to master trouble, the light which helps us to look into divine mysteries, the inward spiritual principle given in regeneration, by which we have fellowship with God and with his Son Jesus Christ—these are main ingredients in the life which you need. O my dear friend, life—the life of God in the soul—is to me the one thing needful, the one thing without which all the world were not worth the having. It were better to be poor and hungry and naked, than to be without this inner life. It is true life in this world to live by faith upon the Son of God; and that you are missing and despising. This is the life which made your mother what she was: you remember her holy living, and you cannot forget her triumphant dying. The life which makes men holy, happy, safe, and blessed is “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” and this it is that you need. Will you reject it? O be not so foolish.

Remember that this life which you spurn is the life eternal. It is the life with which you are to live in another world, the life which shall qualify you to dwell with cherubim and seraphim and join their songs, the life which will enable you to stand before the throne of God and cast your crown at his feet in ecstasy of grateful joy. It is this that you do not care to have, for you will not come to Christ that you might have life. Do not continue thus to spurn the best of God’s gifts.

Let me tell you, the day will come when you will wring your hands in anguish to think that you despised that life. It may be that it will be so in the throes of death, but it is certain that it will be so amid the terrors of judgment, when there shall open wide before you the gates of hell, and before you shall blaze the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. They who are not born twice will have to die twice; and he that hath not life through faith in Jesus must die the second death, and endure its pangs for ever and for ever. See, then, the life you spurn, dear friend, and ask yourself whether this be wise.

Next think—and I wish I could speak to you as I would—think of *the person* whom you reject. “You will not come unto me,” says Christ. I have been thinking of this all day—how it is that any man can be so base as not to come to my Lord Jesus Christ. Look at him: let me portray him to you as he completed your redemption. He hangs upon his cross: his face is all disstained with the bruises and the spittle of the rough soldiery, and adown it trickle the red drops that have been started from his temples by the crown of thorns. His eyes are red with weeping and with watching, and his visage is more marred than that of any man. You can tell all his bones; his body is emaciated and worn with anguish. His hands the cruel nails have dragged and torn till you see the wide gaping wounds from which the blood distils. His feet are the same, they are both founts of blood: and then his side! Behold his side, from which gushed blood and water from the deep wound made by the spear. It is he who thus redeemed mankind. The Lord of glory hangs there! The only begotten Son of the Highest, the Prince of the kings

of the earth, hath emptied himself of all glory for you—hath given up himself to bleed and to die a felon's death for you. And what is your attitude towards him? You turn your backs upon him! Is it nothing to you? "Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?" Do you mean that it is nothing to you that Jesus should bleed to redeem men? Do you mean to refuse a share in that redemption? Do you utterly reject the bloody ransom price he paid upon the cross? If it be so, then put it down in plain English—put it down in black and white, and sign your name to it, *I refuse Christ's blood*. To write it down is the very best thing you can do, if it be so indeed; because, perhaps, when you have read the dreadful lines your conscience may be lashed into something like life, and you may begin to look at him whom you have pierced, and mourn because of him. Do think of this, you that will not come unto him that you might have life.

But, lo, I see him yet again. He is in heaven now. Quite another picture may we set before you. There he is at the right hand of God, even the Father, clothed with a snow-white garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle, distributing crowns and thrones worshipped by ten thousand times ten thousand blood-washed spirits, and angels in all their ranks. Now be ye sure of this, that he it is to whom you will not come. From his glory as well as from his shame you turn away. It is well for me that I do not feel just now about it as I did before I entered this pulpit, for if I did, I could only stand here and burst into tears, and could not dare to say what I am uttering now. This is so unkind to Jesus! So ungenerous to Jesus! I cannot bear it. It is at the price of your souls that you reject him. Will you sooner be damned than have him? Do you mean that? What strange hate is this, that to show your despite of Jesus you will destroy yourselves? O foolish sinners! Foolish sinners! What mad freak of sin is this, that you will bear your sins and dare the death they bring, sooner than have Christ to be your Saviour? Yet it is so, so long as it is true that you will not come to him that you might have life.

Now, think again what it is you are doing. *What is this which you refuse to do?* What is the action you refuse? You refuse to come to him. If it were to come to Sinai, where the trumpet waxes exceeding loud and long, and where the flaming lightnings flash forth amidst tremendous thunders, I could understand your reluctance: but the deed you refuse to do is to come to Calvary, to come to Jesus, where nothing sounds but love and mercy. You will not come to him. That means, with some of you, that you will not even think about Christ. He may die, but you cannot trouble to think his redemption over; he may rise, and thus may justify his people, but you have something else to think about; and that something else with some of you is earning your daily bread. With others of you it is only how you may pass the hours, and go from one amusement to another. Salvation is worth Christ dying for, but not worth your thinking about! Alas, how the mass of people in London think of anything except Christ and their souls! The papers ring with some fresh thing, and the news is on everybody's tongue; but my Lord's death for sinners—oh, it is a bore, is it not? It is a weariness to hear about it, and "sermons are very dull" they say. It is these men's hearts are dead that sermons are dull. Jesus is not

endured because men will not come unto him and live. O blessed Spirit, turn their hard hearts and stubborn wills, and turn them now.

While some will condescend to think a little, yet they utterly refuse to come to the point and believe. Now, surely, the very least thing that the Lord Jesus Christ can claim of us is that we believe him. When has he ever been false? What is there about his character that is untrue? It is due to truth to render to it our confidence and our trust; and when we know that this faith, this believing him, this trusting him, which is his due, is, nevertheless, simple as it is, the highest and most saving act of the mind, it is strange that we should still refuse to believe. What Jesus claims is that we so believe him as to obey him. Now, if he were a tyrant we might very well be reluctant to obey: but he is so gracious, his yoke is so easy, and his burden is so light, that it is foolish as well as wicked to stand out. All his followers tell us that there never was such a Master, and that they wish they could altogether obey his every will and wish, for obedience to him is bliss to them; and yet you refuse to yield obedience to such a Master? Is this wise or right? He asks your love—the love of your heart. What a heart that must be which cannot and will not love him! How foul, how vile, how dead, how black; how stony is the heart that cannot love him who gave his heart's blood to redeem us! O soul, soul, soul, if you perish, it is not because the gospel was hard and exacting, and its terms severe, or because the saving act was impossible to you and out of your reach: you perish because you will not come unto him that you might have life.

I desire you still to keep your eye fixed on that fact, my friend, that you are acting as if you had said, "I will not come to Christ that I might have life." *Think of why you will not come.* Can you give me some good reason why you will not come? Perhaps you answer that you hope to find salvation somewhere else. These Jews fancied so. They thought that they would find it in the Scriptures. "In them ye think ye have eternal life." Hence a personal Christ was rejected, that they might go on searching into the original text, counting the letters, and disputing over knotty points. They were, however, mistaken: the book cannot save. Perhaps you feel that you can get more good by trying to understand doctrine than by coming to Christ. You will be bitterly mistaken. However excellent the Scriptures are, if you put Scripture in the place of Christ you have made a choice, and you have set your choice in opposition to God's choice, which is this—"that ye believe on *him* whom he hath sent." It is not on "*it*"—that you are to believe, but on "*him* whom he hath sent." That is the great saving point, the person, the very person of the Lord Jesus Christ. O beloved, I wish you could see this—that Jesus Christ gathers up in his person all the teaching of Scripture; that in his blessed person is all the efficacy of his redemptive work for men, and that what is to be done is to come to *him*. When you do not believe in Jesus you refuse to honour the Son of God; and he hath said, "He that refuseth me, refuseth him that sent me." You refuse God when you refuse his Christ.

Possibly, dear friend, the reason why you will not come is that you indulge some secret sin which you cannot give up. O that secret sin! That secret sin! That worm at the root of the soul! I know not

what it is, my friend, but God knows, and thou knowest. Is it thy pride? Canst thou not stoop to be saved by mercy, through the grace of God? Or is it a fleshly lust from which thou canst not separate thyself? Is it dear to thee as thy right hand? Off with it, man! "It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire." Is sin holding thee back from Christ, from life, from heaven? Dear as this Barabbas may be, do not prefer him to thy Lord. Away with the sin, it is a viper! Away with it, or else God will say, "Away with thee."

I fear, in some cases, that the chain which holds men back from Christ is sheer frivolity. It is so with a great many young people; and there are some old people who are quite as trifling, they have grey hairs on the outside of their heads, but none within. Their minds are none the riper for being old. They are silly, frivolous, superficial, trifling with everything, never serious upon any theme, and above all others they need to be sharply rebuked. Ah, sirs, if you must play, I wish you would play with something cheaper than the blood of Christ. If you must trifle, trifle with something that will cost you less than your souls. It seems a dreadful thing for a man to stake his whole estate on the running of a horse, as some have done, but it is less foolish than to stake your endless destiny upon the possibility of your living another week, or another day. Yet you are doing this: you know you are. God awaken you, dear friend! May he speedily awaken you from such folly as this.

Now, I want you, dear hearer, to come back to the point, and look at the fact that you will not come to Christ. You will do anything else, but you will not come to Christ. You will come out to our special meetings, but why do you come? What do you come to these meetings for, if you do not want Christ? And you will pray from mere habit: you would not like to go to sleep without praying after a fashion: but what do you pray for, if you will not have the best gift which God can give you, even Jesus Christ? What is there worth praying for, if you refuse Christ? Yes, you will search the Scriptures, but in the name of reason what for? Why do men go into the harvest fields if they want no grain? Why do they dig in the mines if they do not want to find metals? The Scriptures (with all reverence of them do we speak) are but the mine, and Christ is the treasure; they are the fields, but he is the harvest. Take Christ out of the Bible, and what is it? He is the sum and the substance of it all; and when you search the Scriptures you should search them that you may find him, or else you misuse and abuse them. But why this strange reluctance? "Oh, I want to feel," says one. Yes, I know. You would like to feel deep convictions; you would like anything rather than to come to Christ. "But," says one, "I must have time to think." I know: you want to be saved by your thinkings—anything is more desirable to you than coming to Christ. But come to Christ just as you are, just as you are *now*, while now his Spirit pleads with you. Ah, you will not do this, some of you will not, and therefore I must leave you. Let us pass on to the third point very briefly.

III. Let us consider thoughtfully **WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF THIS.** I will put myself into your case now, and speak for you.

"I will not come unto Christ that I might have life." When I have said that, what does it involve? It involves that any good feelings which I may have had through hearing the preaching of the gospel, or through listening to the addresses of earnest Christian men, are as the morning cloud, and as the early dew. They are all to end in nothing, and to pass away. They cannot do me good. I have heard sermons in vain; I have read the Scriptures in vain; I have attended prayer-meetings in vain. If I will not come to Christ all these things are in vain. But what next? Why, then I may expect that the feelings I now have (for I am conscious of some measure of holy desire) will pass away. I shall grow harder, and harder, and harder in heart, and more indifferent, and more callous, as time rolls on. And what will happen to me then? Why, this—that I never shall come to Christ at all.

I suppose that some of you, though you will not come yet, think you will come to Jesus one day. Oh, if it were told you, to a dead certainty, that you never would come, you would stand aghast. "Ah, me!" you would say, "must I then be lost for ever? Shall I never come to Christ?" My dear friend, it looks very likely that you never will be saved. If you are to come to Jesus, why not now? *Why not now?* Every day adds to the chances, if I may use such an expression, adds to the deadly "odds" against you, that you never will come to Christ. Ah, it is a prediction which might be terribly accurate if we were to say that some of you who have oftentimes been awakened, and yet have gone to sleep again, will sleep for ever, and will never lift up your eyes till you awake in the flames of hell. Ah, God, of thy mercy prevent this! But this is the last result of all. If I will not come unto Christ that I might have life, then I must die eternally, and be driven for ever from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power. And, O my soul, what will that be? What will that be? Ask those who know what it is. Ask Dives while he begs Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue. Ask those whose perpetual reply is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. But I will not pause to give you their answers, this would be too dreadful. Do look at your future. If ye will not come unto Jesus that ye might have life, ye shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on you.

IV. And now, last of all, LET US HOPE THAT THERE WILL BE A CHANGE, and a change to-night. I felt while I was speaking that some of you were saying, "No, I dare not say that I will not come." Well, then, there is only one other word to say: "*I will come.*" O that you would say, "I will come," and then carry out the resolve at once. "He is worthy of my trust: I will trust him. He is worthy of my obedience: if he will help me, I will obey him. He is worthy of my love: by his rich grace I will love him—I will, I will." Thank God, dear friend, if you have said that, though it has been with trembling lip: *for you may come.* He bids you. His own words are, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You may come. His church invites you, and his Spirit invites you, for "the Spirit and the Bride say Come." We who have ourselves come would all invite you, for it is written, "Let him that heareth say, Come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Do you feel a softness of soul coming over you? Does something whisper, "Now is mercy's hour"?

Then, I beseech thee, quench not the Spirit, and tarry no longer. Nay, tarry not even to leave that pew, and find thy little chamber, and fall on thy knees, but *here and now* yield thyself to him. It will be the best moment thou hast ever lived—the beginning of days to thee. As the night when Israel came out of Egypt shall this night be to thy spirit if thou yield thyself.

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ’s kind arms I fall;
He is my strength and righteousness—
My Jesus, and my all.”

What he bids you do is two-fold, believe and be baptized. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” First, with the heart man believeth, and next with his mouth he maketh confession of Jesus: baptism is the way to make confession according to Christ’s own rule, to which I charge you to be obedient, and may he accept you and bless you this night, for his name’s sake.

We shall sing this one verse, and I ask nobody to sing it who does not mean it.

“’Tis done—the great transaction’s done:
I am my Lord’s, and he is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.”

Now, for once do not stand up, but sit still and sing it just as you are—those who can sing it; as for the rest of you, the Lord have mercy upon you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John v. 24—47.

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CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 19TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."—
Romans x. 4.

You remember we spoke last Sabbath morning of "the days of the Son of man." Oh that every Sabbath now might be a day of that kind in the most spiritual sense. I hope that we shall endeavour to make each Lord's Day as it comes round a day of the Lord, by thinking much of Jesus, by rejoicing much in him, by labouring for him, and by our growingly importunate prayer, that to him may the gathering of the people be. We may not have very many Sabbaths together, death may soon part us; but while we are able to meet as a Christian assembly, let us never forget that Christ's presence is our main necessity, and let us pray for it and entreat the Lord to vouchsafe that presence always in displays of light, life and love! I become increasingly earnest that every preaching time should be a soul-saving time. I can deeply sympathize with Paul when he said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." We have had so much preaching, but, comparatively speaking, so little believing in Jesus; and if there be no believing in him, neither the law nor the gospel has answered its end, and our labour has been utterly in vain. Some of you have heard, and heard, and heard again, but you have not believed in Jesus. If the gospel had not come to your hearing you could not have been guilty of refusing it. "Have they not heard?" says the apostle. "Yes, verily;" but still "they have not all obeyed the gospel." Up to this very moment there has been no hearing with the inner ear, and no work of faith in the heart, in the case of many whom we love. Dear friends, is it always to be so? How long is it to be so? Shall there not soon come an end of this reception of the outward means and rejection of the inward grace? Will not your soul soon close in with Christ for present salvation? Break! Break, O heavenly day, upon the benighted ones, for our hearts are breaking over them.

No. 1,325.

The reason why many do not come to Christ is not because they are not earnest, after a fashion, and thoughtful and desirous to be saved, but because they cannot brook God's way of salvation. "They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." We do get them by our exhortation so far on the way that they become desirous to obtain eternal life, but "they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Mark, "submitted themselves," for it needs submission. Proud man wants to save himself, he believes he can do it, and he will not give over the task till he finds out his own helplessness by unhappy failures. Salvation by grace, to be sued for *in forma pauperis*, to be asked for as an undeserved boon from free, unmerited grace, this it is which the carnal mind will not come to as long as it can help it: I beseech the Lord so to work that some of you may not be able to help it. And oh, I have been praying that, while this morning I am trying to set forth Christ as the end of the law, God may bless it to some hearts, that they may see what Christ did, and may perceive it to be a great deal better than anything they can do; may see what Christ finished, and may become weary of what they themselves have laboured at so long, and have not even well commenced at this day. Perhaps it may please the Lord to enchant them with the perfection of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. As Bunyan would say, "It may, perhaps, set their mouths a watering after it," and when a sacred appetite begins it will not be long before the feast is enjoyed. It may be that when they see the raiment of wrought gold, which Jesus so freely bestows on naked souls, they will throw away their own filthy rags which now they hug so closely.

I am going to speak about two things, this morning, as the Spirit of God shall help me: and the first is, *Christ in connection with the law*—he is "the end of the law for righteousness"; and secondly, *ourselves in connection with Christ*—"to everyone that believeth Christ is the end of the law for righteousness."

I. First, then, **CHRIST IN CONNECTION WITH THE LAW.** The law is that which, as sinners, we have above all things cause to dread; for the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. Towards us the law darts forth devouring flames, for it condemns us, and in solemn terms appoints us a place among the accursed, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Yet, strange infatuation! like the fascination which attracts the gnat to the candle which burns its wings, men by nature fly to the law for salvation, and cannot be driven from it. The law can do nothing else but reveal sin and pronounce condemnation upon the sinner, and yet we cannot get men away from it, even though we show them how sweetly Jesus stands between them and it. They are so enamoured of legal hope that they cling to it when there is nothing to cling to; they prefer Sinai to Calvary, though Sinai has nothing for them but thunders and trumpet warnings of coming judgment. O that for awhile you would listen anxiously while I set forth Jesus my Lord, that you may see the law in him.

Now, what has our Lord to do with the law? He has everything to do with it, for he is its end for the noblest object, namely, for righteousness. He is the "end of the law." What does this mean? I think it

signifies three things : first, that Christ is *the purpose and object* of the law ; secondly, that he is *the fulfilment* of it ; and thirdly, that he is *the termination* of it.

First, then, *our Lord Jesus Christ is the purpose and object of the law.* It was given to lead us to him. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, or rather our attendant to conduct us to the school of Jesus. The law is the great net in which the fish are enclosed that they may be drawn out of the element of sin. The law is the stormy wind which drives souls into the harbour of refuge. The law is the sheriff's officer to shut men up in prison for their sin, concluding them all under condemnation in order that they may look to the free grace of God alone for deliverance. This is the object of the law : it empties that grace may fill, and wounds that mercy may heal. It has never been God's intention towards us, as fallen men, that the law should be regarded as a way to salvation to us, for a way of salvation it can never be. Had man never fallen, had his nature remained as God made it, the law would have been most helpful to him to show him the way in which he should walk : and by keeping it he would have lived, for "he that doeth these things shall live in them." But ever since man has fallen the Lord has not proposed to him a way of salvation by works, for he knows it to be impossible to a sinful creature. The law is already broken ; and whatever man can do he cannot repair the damage he has already done ; therefore he is out of court as to the hope of merit. The law demands perfection, but man has already fallen short of it ; and therefore let him do his best he cannot accomplish what is absolutely essential. The law is meant to lead the sinner to faith in Christ, by showing the impossibility of any other way. It is the black dog to fetch the sheep to the shepherd, the burning heat which drives the traveller to the shadow of the great rock in a weary land.

Look how the law is adapted to this ; for, first of all, *it shows man his sin.* Read the ten commandments and tremble as you read them. Who can lay his own character down side by side with the two tablets of divine precept without at once being convinced that he has fallen far short of the standard ? When the law comes home to the soul it is like light in a dark room revealing the dust and the dirt which else had been unperceived. It is the test which detects the presence of the poison of sin in the soul. "I was alive without the law once," said the apostle, "but when the commandment came sin revived and I died." Our comeliness utterly fades away when the law blows upon it. Look at the commandments, I say, and remember how sweeping they are, how spiritual, how far-reaching. They do not merely touch the outward act, but dive into the inner motive and deal with the heart, the mind, the soul. There is a deeper meaning in the commands than appears upon their surface. Gaze into their depths and see how terrible is the holiness which they require. As you understand what the law demands you will perceive how far you are from fulfilling it, and how sin abounds where you thought there was little or none of it. You thought yourself rich and increased in goods and in no need of anything, but when the broken law visits you your spiritual bankruptcy and utter penury stare you in the face. A true balance discovers short weight, and such is the first effect of the law upon the conscience of man.

The law also shows *the result and mischief of sin*. Look at the types of the old Mosaic dispensation, and see how they were intended to lead men to Christ by making them see their unclean condition and their need of such cleansing as only he can give. Every type pointed to our Lord Jesus Christ. If men were put apart because of disease or uncleanness, they were made to see how sin separated them from God and from his people; and when they were brought back and purified with mystic rites in which were scarlet wool and hyssop and the like, they were made to see how they can only be restored by Jesus Christ, the great High Priest. When the bird was killed that the leper might be clean, the need of purification by the sacrifice of a life was set forth. Every morning and evening a lamb died to tell of daily need of pardon, if God is to dwell with us. We sometimes have fault found with us for speaking too much about *blood*; yet under the old testament the blood seemed to be everything, and was not only spoken of but actually presented to the eye. What does the apostle tell us in the Hebrews? "Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, this is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." The blood was on the veil, and on the altar, on the hangings, and on the floor of the tabernacle: no one could avoid seeing it. I resolve to make my ministry of the same character, and more and more sprinkle it with the blood of atonement. Now the abundance of the blood of old was meant to show clearly that sin has so polluted us that without an atonement God is not to be approached: we must come by the way of sacrifice or not at all. We are so unacceptable in ourselves that unless the Lord sees us with the blood of Jesus upon us he must away with us. The old law, with its emblems and figures, set forth many truths as to men's selves and the coming Saviour, intending by every one of them to preach Christ. If any stopped short of him, they missed the intent and design of the law. Moses leads up to Joshua, and the law ends at Jesus.

Turning our thoughts back again to the moral rather than the ceremonial law, it was intended to teach men *their utter helplessness*. It shows them how short they fall of what they ought to be, and it also shows them, when they look at it carefully, how utterly impossible it is for them to come up to the standard. Such holiness as the law demands no man can reach of himself. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." If a man says that he can keep the law, it is because he does not know what the law is. If he fancies that he can ever climb to heaven up the quivering sides of Sinai, surely he can never have seen that burning mount at all. Keep the law! Ah, my brethren, while we are yet talking about it we are breaking it; while we are pretending that we can fulfil its letter, we are violating its spirit, for pride as much breaks the law as lust or murder. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?"

No, soul, thou canst not help thyself in this thing, for since only by perfection thou canst live by the law, and since that perfection is impossible, thou canst not find help in the covenant of works. In grace there is hope, but as a matter of debt there is none, for we do not merit anything but wrath. The law tells us this, and the sooner we know it to be so the better, for the sooner we shall fly to Christ.

The law also shows us *our great need*—our need of cleansing, cleansing with the water and with the blood. It discovers to us our filthiness, and this naturally leads us to feel that we must be washed from it if we are ever to draw near to God. So the law drives us to accept of Christ as the one only person who can cleanse us, and make us fit to stand within the veil in the presence of the Most High. The law is the surgeon's knife which cuts out the proud flesh that the wound may heal. The law by itself only sweeps and raises the dust, but the gospel sprinkles clean water upon the dust, and all is well in the chamber of the soul. The law kills, the gospel makes alive; the law strips, and then Jesus Christ comes in and robes the soul in beauty and glory. All the commandments, and all the types direct us to Christ, if we will but heed their evident intent. They wean us from self, they put us off from the false basis of self-righteousness, and bring us to know that only in Christ can our help be found. So, first of all, Christ is the end of the law, in that he is its great purpose.

And now, secondly, he is *the law's fulfilment*. It is impossible for any of us to be saved without righteousness. The God of heaven and earth by immutable necessity demands righteousness of all his creatures. Now, Christ has come to give to us the righteousness which the law demands, but which it never bestows. In the chapter before us we read of "the righteousness which is of faith," which is also called "God's righteousness"; and we read of those who "shall not be ashamed" because they are righteous by believing, "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." What the law could not do Jesus has done. He provides the righteousness which the law asks for but cannot produce. What an amazing righteousness it must be which is as broad and deep and long and high as the law itself. The commandment is exceeding broad, but the righteousness of Christ is as broad as the commandment, and goes to the end of it. Christ did not come to make the law milder, or to render it possible for our cracked and battered obedience to be accepted as a sort of compromise. The law is not compelled to lower its terms, as though it had originally asked too much; it is holy and just and good, and ought not to be altered in one jot or tittle, nor can it be. Our Lord gives the law all it requires, not a part, for that would be an admission that it might justly have been content with less at first. The law claims complete obedience without one spot or speck, failure, or flaw, and Christ has brought in such a righteousness as that, and gives it to his people. The law demands that the righteousness should be without omission of duty and without commission of sin, and the righteousness which Christ has brought in is just such an one that for its sake the great God accepts his people and counts them to be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The law will not be content without spiritual obedience, mere outward compliances will not satisfy. But our Lord's obedience was as deep as it

was broad, for his zeal to do the will of him that sent him consumed him. He says himself, "I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea thy law is within my heart." Such righteousness he puts upon all believers. "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous"; righteous to the full, perfect in Christ. We rejoice to wear the costly robe of fair white linen which Jesus has prepared, and we feel that we may stand arrayed in it before the majesty of heaven without a trembling thought. This is something to dwell upon, dear friends. Only as righteous ones can we be saved, but Jesus Christ makes us righteous, and therefore we are saved. He is righteous who believeth on him, even as Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," because they are made righteous in Christ. Yea, the Holy Spirit by the mouth of Paul challengeth all men, angels, and devils, to lay anything to the charge of God's elect, since Christ hath died. O law, when thou demandest of me a perfect righteousness, I, being a believer, present it to thee; for through Christ Jesus faith is accounted unto me for righteousness. The righteousness of Christ is mine, for I am one with him by faith, and this is the name wherewith he shall be called—"The Lord our righteousness."

Jesus has thus fulfilled the original demands of the law, but you know, brethren, that since we have broken the law there are other demands. For the remission of past sins something more is asked now than present and future obedience. Upon us, on account of our sins, the curse has been pronounced, and a penalty has been incurred. It is written that he "will by no means clear the guilty," but every transgression and iniquity shall have its just punishment and reward. Here, then, let us admire that the Lord Jesus Christ is the end of the law as to penalty. That curse and penalty are awful things to think upon, but Christ has ended all their evil, and thus discharged us from all the consequences of sin. As far as every believer is concerned the law demands no penalty and utters no curse. The believer can point to the Great Surety on the tree of Calvary, and say, "See there, oh law, there is the vindication of divine justice which I offer to thee. Jesus pouring out his heart's blood from his wounds and dying on my behalf is my answer to thy claims, and I know that I shall be delivered from wrath through him." The claims of the law both as broken and unbroken Christ has met: both the positive and the penal demands are satisfied in him. This was a labour worthy of a God, and lo, the incarnate God has achieved it. He has finished the transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness. All glory be to his name.

Moreover, not only has the penalty been paid, but Christ has put great and special honour upon the law in so doing. I venture to say that if the whole human race had kept the law of God and not one of them had violated it, the law would not stand in so splendid a position of honour as it does to-day when the man Christ Jesus, who is also the Son of God, has paid obedience to it. God himself, incarnate, has in his life, and yet more in his death, revealed the supremacy of law; he has shown that not even love nor sovereignty can set aside justice. Who shall say a word against the law to which the Lawgiver himself submits? Who

shall now say that it is too severe when he who made it submits himself to its penalties. Because he was found in fashion as a man, and was our representative, the Lord demanded from his own Son perfect obedience to the law, and the Son voluntarily bowed himself to it without a single word, taking no exception to his task. "Yea, thy law is my delight," saith he, and he proved it to be so by paying homage to it even to the full. Oh wondrous law under which even Emmanuel serves! Oh matchless law whose yoke even the Son of God does not disdain to bear, but being resolved to save his chosen was made under the law, lived under it and died under it, "obedient to death, even the death of the cross."

The law's stability also has been secured by Christ. That alone can remain which is proved to be just, and Jesus has proved the law to be so, magnifying it and making it honourable. He says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." I shall have to show you how he has made an end of the law in another sense, but as to the settlement of the eternal principles of right and wrong, Christ's life and death have achieved this for ever. "Yea, we establish the law," said Paul, "we do not make void the law through faith." The law is proved to be holy and just by the very gospel of faith, for the gospel which faith believes in does not alter or lower the law, but teaches us how it was to the uttermost fulfilled. Now shall the law stand fast for ever and ever, since even to save elect man God will not alter it. He had a people, chosen, beloved, and ordained to life, yet he would not save them at the expense of one principle of right. They were sinful, and how could they be justified unless the law was suspended or changed? Was, then, the law changed? It seemed as if it must be so, if man was to be saved, but Jesus Christ came and showed us how the law could stand firm as a rock, and yet the redeemed could be justly saved by infinite mercy. In Christ we see both mercy and justice shining full orb'd, and yet neither of them in any degree eclipsing the other. The law has all it ever asked, as it ought to have, and yet the Father of all mercies sees all his chosen saved as he determined they should be through the death of his Son. Thus I have tried to show you how Christ is the fulfilment of the law to its utmost end. May the Holy Ghost bless the teaching.

And now, thirdly, he is the end of the law in the sense that he is *the termination of it*. He has terminated it in two senses. First of all, his people are not under it as a covenant of life. "We are not under the law, but under grace." The old covenant as it stood with father Adam was "This do and thou shalt live": its command he did not keep, and consequently he did not live, nor do we live in him, since in Adam all died. The old covenant was broken, and we became condemned thereby, but now, having suffered death in Christ, we are no more under it, but are dead to it. Brethren, at this present moment, although we rejoice to do good works, we are not seeking life through them, we are not hoping to obtain divine favour by our own goodness, nor even to keep ourselves in the love of God by any merit of our own. Chosen, not for our works, but according to the eternal will and good pleasure of God;

called, not of works, but by the Spirit of God, we desire to continue in this grace and return no more to the bondage of the old covenant. Since we have put our trust in an atonement provided and applied by grace through Christ Jesus, we are no longer slaves but children, not working to be saved, but saved already, and working because we are saved. Neither that which we do, nor even that which the Spirit of God worketh in us is to us the ground and basis of the love of God toward us, since he loved us from the first, because he would love us, unworthy though we were; and he loves us still in Christ, and looks upon us not as we are in ourselves, but as we are in him; washed in his blood and covered in his righteousness. Ye are not under the law, Christ has taken you from the servile bondage of a condemning covenant and made you to receive the adoption of children, so that now ye cry, Abba, Father.

Again, Christ is the terminator of the law, for we are no longer under its curse. The law cannot curse a believer, it does not know how to do it; it blesses him, yea, and he shall be blessed; for as the law demands righteousness and looks at the believer in Christ, and sees that Jesus has given him all the righteousness it demands, the law is bound to pronounce him blessed. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Oh, the joy of being redeemed from the curse of the law by Christ, who was "made a curse for us," as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Do ye, my brethren, understand the sweet mystery of salvation? Have you ever seen Jesus standing in your place that you may stand in his place? Christ accused and Christ condemned, and Christ led out to die, and Christ smitten of the Father, even to the death, and then you cleared, justified, delivered from the curse, because the curse has spent itself on your Redeemer. You are admitted to enjoy the blessing because the righteousness which was his is now transferred to you that you may be blessed of the Lord world without end. Do let us triumph and rejoice in this evermore. Why should we not? And yet some of God's people get under the law as to their feelings, and begin to fear that because they are conscious of sin they are not saved, whereas it is written, "he justifieth the ungodly." For myself, I love to live near a sinner's Saviour. If my standing before the Lord depended upon what I am in myself and what good works and righteousness I could bring, surely I should have to condemn myself a thousand times a day. But to get away from that and to say, "I have believed in Jesus Christ and therefore righteousness is mine," this is peace, rest, joy, and the beginning of heaven! When one attains to this experience, his love to Jesus Christ begins to flame up, and he feels that if the Redeemer has delivered him from the curse of the law he will not continue in sin, but he will endeavour to live in newness of life. We are not our own, we are bought with a price, and we would therefore glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are the Lord's. Thus much upon Christ in connection with the law.

II. Now, secondly, OURSELVES IN CONNECTION WITH CHRIST—for "Christ is the end of the law to every one that believeth." Now see the point "to every one that believeth," there the stress lies. Come, man, woman, dost thou believe? No weightier question can be asked under

heaven. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And what is it to believe? It is not merely to accept a set of doctrines and to say that such and such a creed is yours, and there and then to put it on the shelf and forget it. To believe is, to trust, to confide, to depend upon, to rely upon, to rest in. Dost thou believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead? Dost thou believe that he stood in the sinner's stead and suffered the just for the unjust? Dost thou believe that he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him? And dost thou therefore lay the whole weight and stress of thy soul's salvation upon him, yea, upon him alone? Ah then, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to thee, and thou art righteous. In the righteousness of God thou art clothed if thou believest. It is of no use to bring forward anything else if you are not believing, for nothing will avail. If faith be absent the essential thing is wanting: sacraments, prayers, Bible reading, hearings of the gospel, you may heap them together, high as the stars, into a mountain, huge as high Olympus, but they are all mere chaff if faith be not there. It is thy believing or not believing which must settle the matter. Dost thou look away from thyself to Jesus for righteousness? If thou dost he is the end of the law to thee.

Now observe that there is no question raised about the previous character, for it is written, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to *every one that believeth*." But, Lord, this man before he believed was a persecutor and injurious, he raged and raved against the saints and haled them to prison and sought their blood. Yes, beloved friend, and that is the very man who wrote these words by the Holy Ghost, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." So if I address one here this morning whose life has been defiled with every sin, and stained with every transgression we can conceive of, yet I say unto such, remember "all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ thine iniquities are blotted out, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. This is the glory of the gospel that it is a sinner's gospel; good news of blessing not for those without sin, but for those who confess and forsake it. Jesus came into the world, not to reward the sinless, but to seek and to save that which was lost; and he, being lost and being far from God, who cometh nigh to God by Christ, and believeth in him, will find that he is able to bestow righteousness upon the guilty. He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth, and therefore to the poor harlot that believeth, to the drunkard of many years standing that believeth, to the thief, the liar, and the scoffer who believeth, to those who have aforetime rioted in sin, but now turn from it to trust in him. But I do not know that I need mention such cases as these; to me the most wonderful fact is that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to *me*, for I believe in him. I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day.

Another thought arises from the text, and that is, that there is nothing said by way of qualification as to the strength of the faith. He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth, whether he is Little Faith or Greatheart. Jesus protects the rear rank as well as

the vanguard. There is no difference between one believer and another as to justification. So long as there is a connection between you and Christ the righteousness of God is yours. The link may be very like a film, a spider's line of trembling faith, but, if it runs all the way from the heart to Christ, divine grace can and will flow along the most slender thread. It is marvellous how fine the wire may be that will carry the electric flash. We may want a cable to carry a message across the sea, but that is for the protection of the wire, the wire which actually carries the message is a slender thing. If thy faith be of the mustard-seed kind, if it be only such as tremblingly touches the Saviour's garment's hem, if thou canst only say "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," if it be but the faith of sinking Peter, or weeping Mary, yet if it be faith in Christ, he will be the end of the law for righteousness to thee as well as to the chief of the apostles.

If this be so then, beloved friends, all of us who believe are righteous. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ we have obtained the righteousness which those who follow the works of the law know nothing of. We are not completely sanctified, would God we were; we are not quit of sin in our members, though we hate it; but still for all that, in the sight of God, we are truly righteous, and being qualified by faith we have peace with God. Come, look up, ye believers that are burdened with a sense of sin. While you chasten yourselves and mourn your sin, do not doubt your Saviour, nor question his righteousness. You are black, but do not stop there, go on to say as the spouse did, "I am black, but comely."

"Though in ourselves deform'd we are,
And black as Kedar's tents appear,
Yet, when we put Thy beauties on,
Fair as the courts of Solomon."

Now, mark that the connection of our text assures us that being righteous we are saved; for what does it say here, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be *saved*." He who is justified is saved, or what were the benefit of justification? Over thee, O believer, God hath pronounced the verdict "*saved*," and none shall reverse it. You are saved from sin and death and hell; you are saved even now, with a present salvation; "He hath saved us and called us with a holy calling." Feel the transports of it at this hour. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

And now I have done when I have said just this. If any one here thinks he can save himself, and that his own righteousness will suffice before God, I would affectionately beg him not to insult his Saviour. If your righteousness sufficeth, why did Christ come here to work one out? Will you for a moment compare your righteousness

with the righteousness of Jesus Christ? What likeness is there between you and him? As much as between an emmet and an archangel. Nay, not so much as that: as much as between night and day, hell and heaven. Oh, if I had a righteousness of my own that no one could find fault with, I would voluntarily fling it away to have the righteousness of Christ, but as I have none of my own I do rejoice the more to have my Lord's. When Mr. Whitefield first preached at Kingswood, near Bristol, to the colliers, he could see when their hearts began to be touched by the gutters of white made by the tears as they ran down their black cheeks. He saw they were receiving the gospel, and he writes in his diary "as these poor colliers had no righteousness of their own they therefore gloried in Him who came to save publicans and sinners." Well, Mr. Whitefield, that is true of the colliers, but it is equally true of many of us here, who may not have had black faces, but we had black hearts. We can truly say that we also rejoice to cast away our own righteousness and count it dross and dung that we may win Christ, and be found in him. In him is our sole hope and only trust.

Last of all, for any of you to reject the righteousness of Christ must be to perish everlastingly, because it cannot be that God will accept you or your pretended righteousness when you have refused the real and divine righteousness which he sets before you in his Son. If you could go up to the gates of heaven, and the angel were to say to you, "What title have you to entrance here?" and you were to reply, "I have a righteousness of my own," then for you to be admitted would be to decide that your righteousness was on a par with that of Immanuel himself. Can that ever be? Do you think that God will ever allow such a lie to be sanctioned? Will he let a poor wretched sinner's counterfeit righteousness pass current side by side with the fine gold of Christ's perfection. Why was the fountain filled with blood if you need no washing? Is Christ a superfluity? Oh, it cannot be. You must have Christ's righteousness or be unrighteous, and being unrighteous you will be unsaved, and being unsaved you must remain lost for ever and ever.

What! has it all come to this, then, that I am to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness, and to be made just through faith? Yes, that is it: that is the whole of it. What! trust Christ alone and then live as I like! You cannot live in sin after you have trusted Jesus, for the act of faith brings with it a change of nature and a renewal of your soul. The Spirit of God who leads you to believe will also change your heart. You spoke of "living as you like," you will like to live very differently from what you do now. The things you loved before your conversion you will hate when you believe, and the things you hated you will love. Now, you are trying to be good,

and you make great failures, because your heart is alienated from God : but when once you have received salvation through the blood of Christ, your heart will love God, and then you will keep his commandments, and they will be no longer grievous to you. A change of heart is what you want, and you will never get it except through the covenant of grace. There is not a word about conversion in the old covenant, we must look to the new covenant for that, and here it is—"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." This is one of the greatest covenant promises, and the Holy Ghost performs it in the chosen. Oh that the Lord would sweetly persuade you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that promise and all the other covenant engagements shall be fulfilled to your soul. The Lord bless you ! Spirit of God, send thy blessing on these poor words of mine for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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CHRIST THE CONQUEROR OF SATAN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 26TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—Genesis iii. 15.

THIS is the first gospel sermon that was ever delivered upon the surface of this earth. It was a memorable discourse indeed, with Jehovah himself for the preacher, and the whole human race and the prince of darkness for the audience. It must be worthy of our heartiest attention.

Is it not remarkable that this great gospel promise should have been delivered so soon after the transgression? As yet no sentence had been pronounced upon either of the two human offenders, but the promise was given under the form of a sentence pronounced upon the serpent. Not yet had the woman been condemned to painful travail, or the man to exhausting labour, or even the soil to the curse of thorn and thistle. Truly "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." Before the Lord had said "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return," he was pleased to say that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Let us rejoice, then, in the swift mercy of God, which in the early watches of the night of sin came with comfortable words unto us.

These words were not directly spoken to Adam and Eve, but they were directed distinctly to the serpent himself, and that by way of punishment to him for what he had done. It was a day of cruel triumph to him: such joy as his dark mind is capable of had filled him, for he had indulged his malice, and gratified his spite. He had in the worst sense destroyed a part of God's works, he had introduced sin into the new world, he had stamped the human race with his own image, and gained new forces to promote rebellion and to multiply transgression, and therefore he felt that sort of gladness which a fiend can know who bears a hell within him. But now God comes in, takes up the quarrel personally, and causes him to be disgraced on the very battle-field upon which he had gained a temporary success. He tells the dragon that he

will undertake to deal with him; this quarrel shall not be between the serpent and man, but between God and the serpent. God saith, in solemn words, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed," and he promises that there shall rise in fulness of time a champion, who, though he suffer, shall smite in a vital part the power of evil, and bruise the serpent's head. This was the more, it seems to me, a comfortable message of mercy to Adam and Eve, because they would feel sure that the tempter would be punished, and as that punishment would involve blessing for them, the vengeance due to the serpent would be the guarantee of mercy to themselves. Perhaps, however, by thus obliquely giving the promise, the Lord meant to say, "Not for your sakes do I this, O fallen man and woman, nor for the sake of your descendants; but for my own name and honour's sake, that it be not profaned and blasphemed amongst the fallen spirits. I undertake to repair the mischief which has been caused by the tempter, that my name and my glory may not be diminished among the immortal spirits who look down upon the scene." All this would be very humbling but yet consolatory to our parents if they thought of it, seeing that mercy given for God's sake is always to our troubled apprehension more sure than any favour which could be promised to us for our own sake. The divine sovereignty and glory afford us a stronger foundation of hope than merit, even if merit can be supposed to exist.

Now we must note concerning this first gospel sermon that on it the earliest believers stayed themselves. This was all that Adam had by way of revelation, and all that Abel had received. This one lone star shone in Abel's sky; he looked up to it and he believed. By its light he spelt out "sacrifice," and therefore he brought of the firstlings of his flock and laid them upon the altar, and proved in his own person how the seed of the serpent hated the seed of the woman, for his brother slew him for his testimony. Although Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied concerning the second advent, yet he does not appear to have uttered anything new concerning the first coming, so that still this one promise remained as man's sole word of hope. The torch which flamed within the gates of Eden just before man was driven forth lit up the world to all believers until the Lord was pleased to give more light, and to renew and enlarge the revelation of his covenant, when he spake to his servant Noah. Those hoary fathers who lived before the flood rejoiced in the mysterious language of our text, and resting on it, they died in faith. Nor, brethren, must you think it a slender revelation, for, if you attentively consider, it is wonderfully full of meaning. If it had been on my heart to handle it doctrinally this morning, I think I could have shown you that it contains all the gospel. There lie within it, as an oak lies within an acorn, all the great truths which make up the gospel of Christ. Observe that here is the grand mystery of the incarnation. Christ is that seed of the woman who is here spoken of; and there is a hint not darkly given as to how that Incarnation would be effected. Jesus was not born after the ordinary manner of the sons of men. Mary was overshadowed of the Holy Ghost, and "the holy thing" which was born of her was as to his humanity the seed of the woman only; as it is written, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his

name Immanuel." The promise plainly teaches that the deliverer would be born of a woman, and, carefully viewed, it also foreshadows the divine method of the Redeemer's conception and birth. So also is the doctrine of the two seeds plainly taught here—"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed." There was evidently to be in the world a seed of the woman on God's side against the serpent, and a seed of the serpent that should always be upon the evil side even as it is unto this day. The church of God and the synagogue of Satan both exist. We see an Abel and a Cain, an Isaac and an Ishmael, a Jacob and an Esau; those that are born after the flesh, being the children of their father the devil, for his works they do, but those that are born again—being born after the Spirit, after the power of the life of Christ, are thus in Christ Jesus the seed of the woman, and contend earnestly against the dragon and his seed. Here, too, the great fact of the sufferings of Christ is clearly foretold—"Thou shalt bruise his heel." Within the compass of those words we find the whole story of our Lord's sorrows from Bethlehem to Calvary. "It shall bruise thy head": there is the breaking of Satan's regal power, there is the clearing away of sin, there is the destruction of death by resurrection, there is the leading of captivity captive in the ascension, there is the victory of truth in the world through the descent of the Spirit, and there is the latter-day glory in which Satan shall be bound, and there is, lastly, the casting of the evil one and all his followers into the lake of fire. The conflict and the conquest are both in the compass of these few fruitful words. They may not have been fully understood by those who first heard them, but to us they are now full of light. The text at first looks like a flint, hard and cold; but sparks fly from it plentifully, for hidden fires of infinite love and grace lie concealed within. Over this promise of a gracious God we ought to rejoice exceedingly.

We do not know what our first parents understood by it, but we may be certain that they gathered a great amount of comfort from it. They must have understood that they were not then and there to be destroyed, because the Lord had spoken of a "seed." They would argue that it must be needful that Eve should live if there should be a seed from her. They understood, too, that if that seed was to overcome the serpent and bruise his head, it must augur good to themselves: they could not fail to see that there was some great, some mysterious benefit to be conferred upon them by the victory which their seed would achieve over the instigator of their ruin. They went on in faith upon this, and were comforted in travail and in toil, and I doubt not both Adam and his wife in the faith thereof entered into everlasting rest.

This morning I intend to handle this text in three ways. First, we shall notice *its facts*; secondly, we shall consider *the experience within the heart of each believer which tallies to those facts*; and then, thirdly, *the encouragement* which the text and its connection as a whole afford to us.

I. THE FACTS. The facts are four, and I call your earnest attention to them. The first is *Enmity was excited*. The text begins, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." They had been very friendly; the woman and the serpent had conversed together. She thought at the time that the serpent was her friend; and she was so much his friend

that she took his advice in the teeth of God's precept, and was willing to believe bad things of the great Creator, because this wicked, crafty serpent insinuated the same. Now, at the moment when God spake, that friendship between the woman and the serpent had already in a measure come to an end, for she had accused the serpent to God, and said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." So far, so good. The friendship of sinners does not last long; they have already begun to quarrel, and now the Lord comes in and graciously takes advantage of the quarrel which had commenced, and says, "I will carry this disagreement a great deal further, I will put enmity between thee and the woman." Satan counted on man's descendants being his confederates, but God would break up this covenant with hell, and raise up a seed which should war against the Satanic power. Thus we have here God's first declaration that he will set up a rival kingdom to oppose the tyranny of sin and Satan, that he will create in the hearts of a chosen seed an enmity against evil, so that they shall fight against it, and with many a struggle and pain shall overcome the prince of darkness. The divine Spirit has abundantly achieved this plan and purpose of the Lord, combating the fallen angel by a glorious man: making man to be Satan's foe and conqueror. Henceforth the woman was to hate the evil one, and I do not doubt but what she did so. She had abundant cause for so doing, and as often as she thought of him it would be with infinite regret that she could have listened to his malicious and deceitful talk. The woman's seed has also evermore had enmity against the evil one. I mean not the carnal seed, for Paul tells us, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." The carnal seed of the man and the woman are not meant, but the spiritual seed, even Christ Jesus and those who are in him. Wherever you meet these, they hate the serpent with a perfect hatred. We would if we could destroy from our souls every work of Satan, and out of this poor afflicted world of ours we would root up every evil which he has planted. That seed of the woman, that glorious *One*,—for he speaks not of seeds as of many but of seed that is one,—you know how he abhorred the devil and all his devices. There was enmity between Christ and Satan, for he came to destroy the works of the devil and to deliver those who are under bondage to him. For that purpose was he born; for that purpose did he live; for that purpose did he die; for that purpose he has gone into the glory, and for that purpose he will come again, that everywhere he may find out his adversary and utterly destroy him and his works from amongst the sons of men. This putting of the enmity between the two seeds was the commencement of the plan of mercy, the first act in the programme of grace. Of the woman's seed it was henceforth said, "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

Then comes the second prophecy, which has also turned into a fact, namely *the coming of the champion*. The seed of the woman by promise is to champion the cause, and oppose the dragon. That seed is the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophet Micah saith, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel;

whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth." To none other than the babe which was born in Bethlehem of the blessed Virgin can the words of prophecy refer. She it was who did conceive and bear a son, and it is concerning her son that we sing, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." On the memorable night at Bethlehem, when angels sang in heaven, the seed of the woman appeared, and as soon as ever he saw the light the old serpent, the devil, entered into the heart of Herod if possible to slay him, but the Father preserved him, and suffered none to lay hands on him. As soon as he publicly came forward upon the stage of action, thirty years after, Satan met him foot to foot. You know the story of the temptation in the wilderness, and how there the woman's seed fought with him who was a liar from the beginning. The devil assailed him thrice with all the artillery of flattery, malice, craft and falsehood, but the peerless champion stood unwounded, and chased his foeman from the field. Then our Lord set up his kingdom, and called one and another unto him, and carried the war into the enemy's country. In divers places he cast out devils. He spake to the wicked and unclean spirit and said, "I charge thee come out of him," and the demon was expelled. Legions of devils flew before him: they sought to hide themselves in swine to escape from the terror of his presence. "Art thou come to torment us before our time?" was their cry when the wonder-working Christ dislodged them from the bodies which they tormented. Yea, and he made his own disciples mighty against the evil one, for in his name they cast out devils, till Jesus said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Then there came a second personal conflict, for I take it that Gethsemane's sorrows were to a great degree caused by a personal assault of Satan, for our Master said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." He said also, "The Prince of this world cometh." What a struggle it was. Though Satan had nothing in Christ, yet did he seek if possible to lead him away from completing his great sacrifice, and there did our Master sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling to the ground, in the agony which it cost him to contend with the fiend. Then it was that our Champion began the last fight of all and won it to the bruising of the serpent's head. Nor did he end till he had spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly.

"Now is the hour of darkness past,
Christ has assumed his reigning power;
Behold the great accuser cast
Down from his seat to reign no more."

The conflict our glorious Lord continues in his seed. We preach Christ crucified, and every sermon shakes the gates of hell. We bring sinners to Jesus by the Spirit's power, and every convert is a stone torn down from the wall of Satan's mighty castle. Yea, and the day shall come when everywhere the evil one shall be overcome, and the words of John in the Revelation shall be fulfilled. "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with

him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Thus did the Lord God in the words of our text promise a champion who should be the seed of the woman, between whom and Satan there should be war for ever and ever: that champion has come, the man-child has been born, and though the dragon is wroth with the woman, and makes war with the remnant of her seed which keep the testimony of Jesus Christ, yet the battle is the Lord's, and the victory falleth unto him whose name is Faithful and True, who in righteousness doth judge and make war.

The third fact which comes out in the text, though not quite in that order, is that *our Champion's heel should be bruised*. Do you need that I explain this? You know how all his life long his heel, that is, his lower part, his human nature, was perpetually being made to suffer. He carried our sicknesses and sorrows. But the bruising came mainly when both in body and in mind his whole human nature was made to agonize; when his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and his enemies pierced his hands and his feet, and he endured the shame and pain of death by crucifixion. Look at your Master and your King upon the cross, all distained with blood and dust! There was his heel most cruelly bruised. When they take down that precious body and wrap it in fair white linen and in spices, and lay it in Joseph's tomb, they weep as they handle that casket in which the Deity had dwelt, for there again Satan had bruised his heel. It was not merely that God had bruised him, "though it pleased the Father to bruise him," but the devil had let loose Herod, and Pilate, and Caiaphas, and the Jews, and the Romans, all of them his tools, upon him whom he knew to be the Christ, so that he was bruised of the old serpent. That is all, however! It is only his heel, not his head, which is bruised! For lo, the Champion rises again; the bruise was not mortal nor continual. Though he dies, yet still so brief is the interval in which he slumbers in the tomb that his holy body hath not seen corruption, and he comes forth perfect and lovely in his manhood, rising from his grave as from a refreshing sleep after so long a day of unresting toil! Oh the triumph of that hour! As Jacob only halted on his thigh when he overcame the angel, so did Jesus only retain a scar in his heel, and that he bears to the skies as his glory and beauty. Before the throne he looks like a lamb that has been slain, but in the power of an endless life he liveth unto God.

Then comes the fourth fact, namely, that while his heel was being bruised, *he was to bruise the serpent's head*. The figure represents the dragon as inflicting an injury upon the champion's heel, but at the same moment the champion himself with that heel crushes in the head of the serpent with fatal effect. By his sufferings Christ has overthrown Satan, by the heel that was bruised he has trodden upon the head which devised the bruising.

"Lo, by the sons of hell he dies;
But as he hangs 'twixt earth and skies,
He gives their prince a fatal blow,
And triumphs o'er the powers below."

Though Satan is not dead, my brethren, I was about to say, would God he were, and though he is not converted, and never will be, nor will the malice of his heart ever be driven from him, yet Christ has so far broken his head that he has missed his mark altogether. He intended to make the human race the captives of his power, but they are redeemed from his iron yoke. God has delivered many of them, and the day shall come when he will cleanse the whole earth from the serpent's slimy trail, so that the entire world shall be full of the praises of God. He thought that this world would be the arena of his victory over God and good, instead of which it is already the grandest theatre of divine wisdom, love, grace, and power. Even heaven itself is not so resplendent with mercy as the earth is, for here it is the Saviour poured out his blood, which cannot be said even of the courts of paradise above. Moreover he thought, no doubt, that when he had led our race astray and brought death upon them, he had effectually marred the Lord's work. He rejoiced that they would all pass under the cold seal of death, and that their bodies would rot in the sepulchre. Had he not spoiled the handiwork of his great Lord? God may make man as a curious creature with intertwisted veins and blood nerves, and sinews and muscles, and he may put into his nostrils the breath of life; but, "Ah," saith Satan, "I have infused a poison into him which will make him return to the dust from which he was taken." But now, behold, our Champion whose heel was bruised has risen from the dead, and given us a pledge that all his followers shall rise from the dead also. Thus is Satan foiled, for death shall not retain a bone, nor a piece of a bone, of one of those who belonged to the woman's seed. At the trump of the archangel from the earth and from the sea they shall arise, and this shall be their shout, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Satan, knowing this, feels already that by the resurrection his head is broken. Glory be to the Christ of God for this!

In multitudes of other ways the devil has been vanquished by our Lord Jesus, and so shall he ever be till he shall be cast into the lake of fire.

II. Let us now view OUR EXPERIENCE AS IT TALLIES WITH THESE FACTS. Now, brothers and sisters, we were by nature, as many of us as have been saved, the heirs of wrath even as others. It does not matter how godly our parents were, the first birth brought us no spiritual life, for the promise is not to them which are born of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but only to those who are born of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"; you cannot make it anything else and there it abides, and the flesh, or carnal mind, abideth in death; "it is not reconciled to God, neither indeed can be." He who is born into this world but once, and knows nothing of the new birth, must place himself among the seed of the serpent, for only by regeneration can we know ourselves to be the true seed. How does God deal with us who are his called and chosen ones? He means to save us, and how does he work to that end?

The first thing he does is, he comes to us in mercy, and *puts enmity between us and the serpent*. That is the very first work of grace. There was peace between us and Satan once; when he tempted we yielded; whatever he taught us we believed; we were his willing slaves. But

perhaps you, my brethren, can recollect when first of all you began to feel uneasy and dissatisfied; the world's pleasures no longer pleased you; all the juice seemed to have been taken out of the apple, and you had nothing left but the hard core, which you could not feed upon at all. Then you suddenly perceived that you were living in sin, and you were miserable about it, and though you could not get rid of sin yet you hated it, and sighed over it, and cried, and groaned. In your heart of hearts you remained no longer on the side of evil, for you began to cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" You were already from of old in the covenant of grace ordained to be the woman's seed, and now the decree began to discover itself in life bestowed upon you and working in you. The Lord in infinite mercy dropped the divine life into your soul. You did not know it, but there it was, a spark of the celestial fire, the living and incorruptible seed which abideth for ever. You began to hate sin, and you groaned under it as under a galling yoke; more and more it burdened you, you could not bear it, you hated the very thought of it. So it was with you: is it so now? Is there still enmity between you and the serpent? Indeed you are more and more the sworn enemies of evil, and you willingly acknowledge it.

Then came the champion: that is to say, "Christ was formed in you the hope of glory." You heard of him and you understood the truth about him, and it seemed a wonderful thing that he should be your substitute and stand in your room and place and stead, and bear your sin and all its curse and punishment, and that he should give his righteousness, yea, and his very self, to you that you might be saved. Ah, then you saw how sin could be overthrown, did you not? As soon as your heart understood Christ then you saw that what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, Christ was able to accomplish, and that the power of sin and Satan under which you had been in bondage, and which you now loathed, could and would be broken and destroyed because Christ had come into the world to overcome it.

Next, do you recollect how you were led to see *the bruising of Christ's heel* and to stand in wonder and observe what the enmity of the serpent had wrought in him? Did you not begin to feel the bruised heel yourself? Did not sin torment you? Did not the very thought of it vex you? Did not your own heart become a plague to you? Did not Satan begin to tempt you? Did he not inject blasphemous thoughts, and urge you on to desperate measures; did he not teach you to doubt the existence of God, and the mercy of God, and the possibility of your salvation, and so on? This was his nibbling at your heel. He is at his old tricks still. He worries whom he can't devour with a malicious joy. Did not your worldly friends begin to annoy you? Did they not give you the cold shoulder because they saw something about you so strange and foreign to their tastes? Did they not impute your conduct to fanaticism, pride, obstinacy, bigotry, and the like? Ah, this persecution is the serpent's seed beginning to discover the woman's seed, and to carry on the old war. What does Paul say? "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." True godliness is an unnatural and strange thing to them, and they cannot away with it. Though there are no stakes in Smithfield, nor racks in

the Tower, yet the enmity of the human heart towards Christ and his seed is just the same, and very often shows itself in "trials of cruel mockings" which to tender hearts are very hard to bear. Well, this is your heel being bruised in sympathy with the bruising of the heel of the glorious seed of the woman.

But, brethren, do you know something of the other fact, namely, that *we conquer, for the serpent's head is broken in us*? How say you? Is not the power and dominion of sin broken in you? Do you not feel that you cannot sin because you are born of God? Some sins which were masters of you once, do not trouble you now. I have known a man guilty of profane swearing, and from the moment of his conversion he has never had any difficulty in the matter. We have known a man snatched from drunkenness, and the cure by divine grace has been very wonderful and complete. We have known persons delivered from unclean living, and they have at once become chaste and pure, because Christ has smitten the old dragon such blows that he could not have power over them in that respect. The chosen seed sin and mourn it, but they are not slaves to sin; their heart goeth not after it: they have to say sometimes "the thing I would not that I do," but they are wretched when it is so. They consent with their heart to the law of God that it is good, and they sigh and cry that they may be helped to obey it, for they are no longer under the slavery of sin; the serpent's reigning power and dominion is broken in them.

It is broken next in this way, that the guilt of sin is gone. The great power of the serpent lies in unpardoned sin. He cries "I have made you guilty: I brought you under the curse." "No," say we, "we are delivered from the curse and are now blessed, for it is written, 'Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.' We are no longer guilty, for who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Since Christ hath justified, who is he that condemneth?" Here is a swinging blow for the old dragon's head, such as he never will recover.

Oftentimes the Lord also grants us to know what it is to overcome temptation, and so to break the head of the fiend. Satan allures us with many baits; he has studied our points well, he knows the weakness of the flesh: but many and many a time, blessed be God, we have foiled him completely to his eternal shame! The devil must have felt himself mean that day when he tried to overthrow Job, dragged him down to a dunghill, robbed him of everything, covered him with sores, and yet could not make him yield. Job conquered when he cried, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." A feeble man had vanquished a devil who could raise the wind and blow down a house, and destroy the family who were feasting in it. Devil as he is, and crowned prince of the power of the air, yet the poor bereaved patriarch sitting on the dunghill covered with sores, being one of the woman's seed, through the strength of the inner life won the victory over him.

"Ye sons of God oppose his rage,
Resist, and he'll be gone:
Thus did our dearest Lord engage
And vanquish him alone."

Moreover, dear brethren, we have this hope that the very being of sin in us will be destroyed. The day will come when we shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; and we shall stand before the throne of God, having suffered no injury whatever from the fall and from all the machinations of Satan, for "they are without fault before the throne of God." What triumph that will be! "The Lord will tread Satan under your feet shortly." When he has made you perfect and free from all sin, as he will do, you will have bruised the serpent's head indeed.

And your resurrection, too, when Satan shall see you come up from the grave like one that has been perfumed in a bath of spices, when he shall see you arise in the image of Christ, with the same body which was sown in corruption and weakness raised in incorruption and power, then will he feel an infinite chagrin, and know that his head is bruised by the woman's seed.

I ought to add that every time any one of us is made useful in saving souls we do as it were repeat the bruising of the serpent's head. When you go, dear sister, among those poor children, and pick them up from the gutters, where they are Satan's prey, where he finds the raw material for thieves and criminals, and when through your means, by the grace of God, the little wanderers become children of the living God, then you in your measure bruise the old serpent's head. I pray you do not spare him. When we by preaching the gospel turn sinners from the error of their ways, so that they escape from the power of darkness, again we bruise the serpent's head. Whenever in any shape or way you are blessed to the aiding of the cause of truth and righteousness in the world, you, too, who were once beneath his power, and even now have sometimes to suffer from his nibbling at your heel, you tread upon his head. In all deliverances and victories you overcome, and prove the promise true,—“Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.”

III. Let us speak awhile upon **THE ENCOURAGEMENT** which our text and the context yields to us; for it seems to me to abound.

I want you, brethren, to exercise faith in the promise and be comforted. The text evidently encouraged Adam very much. I do not think we have attached enough importance to the conduct of Adam after the Lord had spoken to him. Notice the simple but conclusive proof which he gave of his faith. Sometimes an action may be very small and unimportant, and yet, as a straw shows which way the wind blows, it may display at once, if it be thought over, the whole state of the man's mind. Adam acted in faith upon what God said, for we read, “And Adam called his wife's name Eve (or Life); because she was the mother of all living” (verse 20). She was not a mother at all, but as the life was to come through her by virtue of the promised seed, Adam marks his full conviction of the truth of the promise though at the time the woman had borne no children. There stood Adam, fresh from the awful presence of God, what more could he say? He might have said with the prophet, “My flesh trembleth for the fear of thee,” but even when he turns round to his fellow-culprit as she stands there trembling and he calls her Eve, mother of the life that is yet to be. It was

grandly spoken by Father Adam : it makes him rise in our esteem. Had he been left to himself he would have murmured or at least despaired, but no, his faith in the new promise gave him hope. He uttered no word of repining against the condemnation to till with toil the unthankful ground, nor on Eve's part was there a word of repining over the appointed sorrows of motherhood ; they each accept the well-deserved sentence with the silence which denotes the perfection of their resignation ; their only word is full of simple faith. There was no child on whom to set their hopes, nor would the true seed be born for many an age, still Eve is to be the mother of all living, and he calls her so. Exercise like faith, my brother, on the far wider revelation which God has given to you, and always extract the utmost comfort from it. Make a point, whenever you receive a promise from God, to get all you can out of it : if you carry out that rule, it is wonderful what comfort you will gain. Some go on the principle of getting as little as possible out of God's word. I believe that such a plan is the proper way with a man's word ; always understand it at the minimum, because that is what he means ; but God's word is to be understood at the maximum, for he will do exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think.

Notice by way of further encouragement that we may regard our reception of Christ's righteousness as an instalment of the final overthrow of the devil. The twenty-first verse says, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." A very condescending, thoughtful, and instructive deed of divine love ! God heard what Adam said to his wife, and saw that he was a believer, and so he comes and gives him the type of the perfect righteousness, which is the believer's portion—he covered him with lasting raiment. No more fig leaves, which were a mere mockery, but a close fitting garment which had been procured through the death of a victim ; the Lord brings that and puts it on him, and Adam could no more say, "I am naked." How could he, for God had clothed him. Now, beloved, let us take out of the promise that is given us concerning our Lord's conquest over the devil this one item and rejoice in it, for Christ has delivered us from the power of the serpent who opened our eyes and told us we were naked, by covering us from head to foot with a righteousness which adorns and protects us, so that we are comfortable in heart, and beautiful in the sight of God, and are no more ashamed.

Next, by way of encouragement in pursuing the Christian life, I would say to young people, expect to be assailed. If you have fallen into trouble through being a Christian, be encouraged by it ; do not at all regret or fear it, but rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy, for this is the constant token of the covenant. There is enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent still, and if you did not experience any of it you might begin to fear that you were on the wrong side. Now that you smart under the sneer of sarcasm and oppression rejoice and triumph, for now are ye partakers with the glorious seed of the woman in the bruising of his heel.

Still further encouragement comes from this. Your suffering as a Christian is not brought upon you for your own sake ; ye are partners with the great seed of the woman, ye are confederates with Christ.

You must not think the devil cares much about you: the battle is against Christ in you. Why, if you were not in Christ, the devil would never trouble you. When you were without Christ in the world you might have sinned as you like, your relatives and work-mates would not have been at all grieved with you, they would rather have joined you in it; but now the serpent's seed hates Christ in you. This exalts the sufferings of persecution to a position far above all common afflictions. I have heard of a woman who was condemned to death in the Marian days, and before her time came to be burned a child was born to her, and she cried out in her sorrow. A wicked adversary, who stood by said, "How will you bear to die for your religion if you make such ado?" "Ah," she said, "Now I suffer in my own person as a woman, but then I shall not suffer, but Christ in me." Nor were these idle words, for she bore her martyrdom with exemplary patience, and rose in her chariot of fire in holy triumph to heaven. If Christ be in you, nothing will dismay you, but you will overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil by faith.

Last of all, let us resist the devil always with this belief, that he has received a broken head. I am inclined to think that Luther's way of laughing at the devil was a very good one, for he is worthy of shame and everlasting contempt. Luther once threw an inkstand at his head when he was tempting him very sorely, and though the act itself appears absurd enough, yet it was a true type of what that greater Reformer was all his life long, for the books he wrote were truly a flinging of the inkstand at the head of the fiend. That is what we have to do: we are to resist him by all means. Let us do this bravely, and tell him to his teeth that we are not afraid of him. Tell him to recollect his bruised head, which he tries to cover with a crown of pride, or with a popish cowl, or with an infidel doctor's hood. We know him, and see the deadly wound he bears. His power is gone; he is fighting a lost battle; he is contending against omnipotence. He has set himself against the oath of the Father; against the blood of the incarnate Son; against the eternal power and Godhead of the blessed Spirit, all of which are engaged in the defence of the seed of the woman in the day of battle. Therefore, brethren, be ye steadfast in resisting the evil one, being strong in faith, giving glory to God.

" 'Tis by thy blood, immortal Lamb,
Thine armies tread the tempter down;
'Tis by thy word and powerful name
They gain the battle and renown.

" Rejoice ye heavens; let every star
Shine with new glories round the sky:
Saints, while ye sing the heavenly war,
Raise your Deliverer's name on high."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis iii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—335, 477, 322.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST, THE OVERCOMER OF THE WORLD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 3RD, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."—John xvi. 33.

WHEN these words were spoken our Saviour was about to leave his disciples to go to his death for their sakes. His great anxiety was that they might not be too much cast down by the trials which would come upon them. He desired to prepare their minds for the heavy sorrows which awaited them, while the powers of darkness and the men of the world wrought their will upon him. Now observe, beloved, that our Lord Jesus, in whom dwells infinite wisdom, knew all the secret springs of comfort, and all the hallowed sources of consolation in heaven and under heaven, and yet in order to console his disciples he spoke, not of heavenly mysteries nor of secrets hidden in the breast of God, but he spake concerning himself. Doth he not herein teach us that there is no balm for the heart like himself, no consolation of Israel comparable to his person and his work. If even such a divine Barnabas, such a first-born son of consolation as the Lord himself must point to what he himself has done, for only so can he make his followers to be of good cheer, then how wise it must be in ministers to preach much of Jesus by way of encouragement to the Lord's afflicted, and how prudent it is for mourners to look to him for the comfort they need. "Be of good cheer," he saith, "*I*"—something about himself—"I have overcome the world." So then, beloved, in all times of depression of spirit hasten away to the Lord Jesus Christ; whenever the cares of this life burden you, and your way seems hard for your weary feet, fly to your Lord. There may be, and there are, other sources of consolation, but they will not at all times serve your turn; but in Him there dwelleth such a fulness of comfort, that whether it be in summer or in winter the streams of comfort are always flowing. In your high estate or in your low estate, and from whatever quarter your trouble may arise, you can resort at once to him and you shall find that he strengthens the hands that hang down and confirms the feeble knees.

No. 1,327.

A further remark suggests itself that the Lord Jesus must be more than man from the tone which he assumed. There are certain persons who deny the godhead of our Lord and yet think well of Jesus as a man; indeed, they have uttered many highly complimentary things with regard to his character: but I wonder it should not strike them that there is a great deal of assumption, presumption, pride, egotism, and all that style of folly in this man if he be nothing more than a man. For what good man whom you would wish to imitate would say to others "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." This is altogether too much for a mere man to say. The Lord Jesus Christ frequently spoke about himself and about what he has done, and commended himself to his disciples as one who was only a man and of a lowly mind could never have done. The Lord was certainly meek and lowly in heart, but no man of that character would have told others so. There is an inconsistency here which none can account for but those who believe him to be the Son of God. Understand him to be divine, put him in his true position as speaking down out of the excellency of his deity to his disciples, and then you can comprehend his so speaking, yea, it becomes infinitely seemly and beautiful. Deny his godhead, and I for one am quite unable to understand how the words before us, and others like them, could ever have fallen from his lips, for none will dare to say that he was boastful. Blessed be thou, O, Son of man, thou art also Son of God, and therefore thou dost not only speak to us with the sympathizing tenderness of a brother man, but with the majestic authority of the Only Begotten of the Father. Divinely condescending are thy words, "I have overcome the world."

If you look at this claim of Jesus without the eye of faith, does it not wear an extraordinary appearance? How could the betrayed man of Nazareth say, "I have overcome the world"? We can imagine Napoleon speaking thus when he had crushed the nations beneath his feet, and shaped the map of Europe to his will. We can imagine Alexander speaking thus when he had rifled the palaces of Persia and led her ancient monarchs captive. But who is this that speaketh on this wise? It is a Galilean, who wears a peasant's garment, and consorts with the poor and the fallen! He has neither wealth nor worldly rank nor honour among men, and yet speaks of having overcome the world. He is about to be betrayed by his own base follower into the hands of his enemies, and then he will be led out to judgment and to death, and yet he says, "I have overcome the world." He is casting an eye to his cross with all its shame, and to the death which ensued from it, and yet he saith, "I have overcome the world." He had not where to lay his head, he had not a disciple that would stand up for him, for he had just said, "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone"; he was to be charged with blasphemy and sedition, and brought before the judge, and find no man to declare his generation; he was to be given up to a brutal soldiery to be mocked and despitefully used and spat upon; his hands and feet were to be nailed to a cross, that he might die a felon's death, and yet he saith, "I have overcome the world." How marvellous, and yet how true! He spoke not after the manner of the flesh nor after the sight of the eye. We must use faith's optics here and look within the veil, and then we shall

see not alone the despised bodily person of the Son of man, but the indwelling, noble, all-conquering soul which transformed shame into honour, and death into glory. May God the Holy Spirit enable us to look through the external to the internal, and see how marvellously the ignominious death was the rough garment which concealed the matchless victory from the purblind eyes of carnal man.

During the last two Sabbath mornings I have spoken of our Lord Jesus Christ: first, as the end of the law; and secondly, as the conqueror over the old serpent; now we come to speak of him as *the overcomer of the world*. Addressing his disciples he said, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Now, *what is this world that he speaks about? and how has he overcome it? and what good cheer is there in the fact for us?*

I. WHAT IS THIS WORLD WHICH HE IS REFERRING TO? I scarcely know a word which is used with so many senses as this word "world." If you will turn to your Bibles you will find the word "world" used in significations widely different, for there is a world which Christ made, "He was in the world and the world was made by him"—that is, the physical world. There is a world which God so loved that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him might not perish. There are several forms of this favourable signification. Then there is a world, the world here meant, which "lieth in the wicked one," a world which knows not Christ, but which is evermore opposed to him: a world for which he says that he does not pray, and a world which he would not have us love—"Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world." Without going into these various meanings, and shades of meaning, which are very abundant, let us just say that we scarcely know how to define what is meant here in so many words, though we know well enough what is meant. Scripture does not give us definitions, but uses language in a popular manner, since it speaks to common people. "The world" is very much the equivalent of the "seed of the serpent," of which we spoke last Sabbath-day. The world here means the visible embodiment of that spirit of evil which was in the serpent, and which now worketh in the children of disobedience; it is the human form of the same evil force with which our Lord contended when he overcame the devil; it means the power of evil in the unregenerate mass of mankind, the energy and power of sin as it dwells in that portion of the world which abideth in death and lieth in the wicked one. The devil is the god of this world, and the prince of this world, and therefore he who is the friend of this world is the enemy of God. The world is the opposite of the church. There is a church which Christ has redeemed and chosen out of the world and separated unto himself, from among men, and of these as renewed by the power of divine grace, he says, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," and again "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Now, the rest of mankind not comprehended amongst the chosen, the redeemed, the called, the saved, are called the world. Of these our Lord said, "O, righteous Father, the world hath not known thee;" and John said, "The world knoweth us not because it knew him not." This is the power which displays a deadly enmity against Christ and

against his chosen ; hence it is called "this present evil world," while the kingdom of grace is spoken of as "the world to come." This is the world of which it is said, "He that is born of God overcometh the world."

You will see that "the world" includes the ungodly themselves, as well as the force of evil in them, but it marks them out, not as creatures nor even as men who have sinned, but as unregenerate, carnal and rebellious, and therefore as the living embodiments of an evil power which works against God ; and so we read of "the world of the ungodly."

Perhaps I ought to add that there has grown up out of the existence of unconverted men and the prevalence of sin in them certain customs, fashions, maxims, rules, modes, manners, forces, all of which go to make up what is called "the world," and there are also certain principles, desires, lusts, governments and powers which also make up a part of the evil thing called "the world." Jesus says "My kingdom is not of this world." James speaks of keeping ourselves "unspotted from the world." John says, "the world passeth away and the lust thereof ;" and Paul says, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed."

Moreover, I may say that the present constitution and arrangement of all things in this fallen state may be comprehended in the term "world," for everything has come under vanity by reason of sin, and things are not to day according to the original plan of the Most High, as designed for man in his innocence. Behold there are trials and troubles springing out of our very existence in this life of which it is said, "in the world ye shall have tribulation." To many a child of God there have befallen hunger and disease and suffering, and unkindness, and various forms of evil which belong not to the world to come, nor to the kingdom which Christ has set up, but which come to them because they are in this present evil world, which has so become because the race of men have fallen under the curse and consequence of sin.

Now the world is all these matters put together, this great conglomeration of mischief among men, this evil which dwelleth here and there and everywhere wherever men are scattered,—this is the thing which we call the world. Every one of us know better what it is than we can tell to anybody else, and perhaps while I am explaining I am rather confounding than expounding. You know just what the world is to some of you—it is not more than your own little family, as to outward form, but much more as to influence. Your actual world may be confined to your own house, but the same principles enter into the domestic circle which pervade kingdoms and states. To others the world takes a wide sweep as they necessarily meet with ungodly men in business, and this we must do unless we are to go altogether out of the world, which is no part of our Lord's plan, for he says, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world." To some who look at the whole mass of mankind, and are called thoughtfully to consider them all because they have to be God's messengers to them, the tendencies and outgoings of the human mind towards that which is evil, and the spirit of men's actions as done against God in all nations and ages,—all these go to make up to them "the world." But be it

what it may, it is a thing out of which tribulation will be sure to come to us, Christ tells us so. It may come in the form of temporal trial of some shape or other ; it may come in the form of temptation which will alight upon us from our fellow-men ; it may come in the form of persecution to a greater or less extent according to our position : but it will come. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." We are sojourners in an enemy's country, and the people of the land wherein we tarry are not our friends, and will not help us on our pilgrimage to heaven. All spiritual men in the world are our friends, but then, like ourselves, they are in the world but they are not of it. From the kingdom of this world whereof Satan is lord we must expect fierce opposition against which we must contend even unto victory if we are to enter into everlasting rest.

II. Now this brings me to the more interesting topic in the second place of **HOW HAS CHRIST OVERCOME THE WORLD ?** And we answer, first he did so *in his life* : then *in his death* : and then *in his rising and his reigning*.

First, *Christ overcame the world in his life*. This is a wonderful study, the overcoming of the world in the life of Christ. I reckon that those first thirty years of which we know so little were a wonderful preparation for his conflict with the world, and that though only in the carpenter's shop, and obscure, and unknown to the great outside world, yet in fact he was not merely preparing for the battle, but he was then beginning to overcome it. In the patience which made him bide his time we see the dawn of the victory. When we are intent upon doing good, and we see mischief and sin triumphant everywhere, we are eager to begin : but suppose it were not the great Father's will that we should be immediately engaged in the fray, how strongly would the world then tempt us to go forward before our time. A transgression of discipline may be caused by over zeal, and this as much breaks through the law of obedience as dulness or sloth would do. The Roman soldier was accounted guilty who, when the army was left with the orders that no man should strike a blow in the leader's absence, nevertheless stepped forward and slew a Gaul ; the act was one of valour, but it was contrary to military discipline, and might have had most baleful results, and so it was condemned. Thus is it sometimes with us ; before we are ready, before we have received our commission, we are in haste to step forward and smite the foe. That temptation must have come to Christ from the world : many a time as he heard of what was going on in the reign of error and hypocrisy his benevolent impulses might have suggested to him to be up and doing, had it not been that he was incapable of wrong desires. Doubtless he was willing to be healing the sick. Was not the land full of sufferers ? He would fain be saving souls—were they not going down to the pit by thousands ? He would gladly have confuted error, for falsehood was doing deadly work, but his hour was not yet come. Yet our Lord and Master had nothing to say till his Father bade him speak. Strongly under an impulse to be at work we know he was, for when he went up to the temple he said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?" That utterance revealed the fire that burned within his soul, and yet he was not preaching nor healing, nor disputing, but still

remained in obscurity all those thirty years, because God would have it so. When the Lord would have us quiet we are doing his will best by being quiet, but yet to be still and calm for so long a time was a wonderful instance of how all his surroundings could not master him, not even when they seemed to work with his philanthropy; he still remained obedient to God, and thus proved himself the overcomer of the world.

When he appears upon the scene of public action you know how he overcomes the world in many ways. First, *by remaining always faithful to his testimony*. He never modified it, not even by so much as a solitary word to please the sons of men. From the first day in which he began to preach even to the closing sentence which he uttered it was all truth and nothing but truth, truth uncoloured by prevailing sentiment, untainted by popular error. He did not, after the manner of the Jesuit, disguise his doctrine by so shaping it that men would hardly know but what it was the very error in which they had been brought up, but he came out with plain speaking, and set himself in opposition to all the powers which ruled the thought and creed of the age. He was no guarder of truth. He allowed truth to fight her own battles in her own way, and you know how she bares her breast to her antagonist's darts, and finds in her own immutable, immortal, and invulnerable life her shield and her spear. His speech was confident, for he knew that truth would conquer in the long run, and therefore he gave forth his doctrine without respect to the age or its prejudices. I do not think that you can say that of anybody else's ministry, not even of the best and bravest of his servants. We can see, in looking at Luther, great and glorious Luther, how Romanism tinged all that he did more or less; and the darkness of the age cast some gloom even over the serene and steadfast soul of Calvin; of each one of the reformers we must say the same: bright stars as all of these were, yet they kept not themselves untarnished by the sphere in which they shone. Every man is more or less affected by his age, and we are obliged, as we read history, to make continual allowances, for we all admit that it would not be fair to judge the men of former times by the standard of the nineteenth century. But, sirs, you may test Christ Jesus if you will by the nineteenth century light, if light it be; you may judge him by any century, ay, you may try him by the bright light of the throne of God: his teaching is pure truth without any admixture, it will stand the test of time and of eternity. His teaching was not affected by the fact of his being born a Jew, nor by the prevalence of the Rabbinical traditions, nor by the growth of the Greek philosophy, nor by any other of the peculiar influences which were then abroad. His teaching was in the world, but it was not of it, nor tinged by it. It was the truth as he had received it from the Father, and the world could not make him add to it, or take from it, or change it in the least degree, and therefore in this respect he overcame the world.

Observe him next in *the deep calm which pervaded his spirit at times when he received the approbation of men*. Our Lord was popular to a very high degree at certain times. How the people thronged around him as his benevolent hands scattered healing on all sides. How they approved of him when he fed them; but how clearly he saw through

that selfish approbation, and said, "Ye seek me because of the loaves and fishes." He never lost his self-possession : you never find him elated by the multitudes following him. There is not an expression that he ever used which even contains a suspicion of self-glorification. Amid their hosannahs his mind is quietly reposing in God. He leaves their acclamations and applause to refresh himself by prayer upon the cold mountains, in the midnight air. He communed with God, and so lived above the praises of men. He walked among them, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, even when they would have taken him by force and made him a king. Once he rides in triumph, as he might often have done if he had pleased, but then it was in such humble style that his pomp was far other than that of kings, a manifestation of lowliness rather than a display of majesty. Amid the willing hosannas of little children, and of those whom he had blessed, he rides along, but you can see that he indulges none of the thoughts of a worldly conqueror, none of the proud ideas of the warrior who returns from the battle stained with blood. No, he is still as meek and as gentle and as kindly as ever he was, and his triumph has not a grain of self-exaltation in it. He had overcome the world. What could the world give him, brethren ? An imperial nature like to his, in which the manhood held such close communion with Deity as is not readily to be imagined, what was there here below to cause pride in him ? If the trump of fame had sounded out its loudest note, what could it have been compared with the songs of cherubim and seraphim to which his ear had been accustomed throughout all ages ? No, allied with his deity, his manhood was superior to all the arts of flattery, and to all the honours which mankind could offer him. He overcame the world.

He was the same when the world tried the other plan upon him. *It frowned at him, but he was calm still.* He had scarcely commenced to preach before they would have cast him from the brow of the hill headlong. Do you not expect, as they are hurrying him to the precipice, to see him turn round upon them and denounce them at least with burning words, such as Elias used ? But no, he speaks not an angry word ; he passes away and is gone out of their midst. In the synagogue they often gnashed their teeth upon him in their malice, but if ever he was moved to indignation it was not because of anything directed against himself ; he always bore all, and scarcely ever spoke a word by way of reply to merely personal attacks. If calumnies were heaped upon him he went on as calmly as if they had not abused him, nor desired to slay him. When he is brought before his judges what a difference there is between the Master and his servant Paul. He is smitten, but he does not say like Paul, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall ;" no, but like a lamb before her shearers he is dumb and openeth not his mouth. If they could have made him angry they would have overcome him ; but he was loving still ; he was gentle, quiet, patient, however much they provoked him. Point me to an impatient word—there is not even a tradition of an angry look that he gave on account of any offence rendered to himself. They could not drive him from his purposes of love, nor could they make him say anything or do anything that was contrary to perfect love. He calls down no fire from heaven : no she bears come out of the wood to devour those who have

mocked him. No, he can say, "I have overcome the world," for whether it smile or whether it frown, in the perfect peace and quiet of his spirit, in the delicious calm of communion with God, the Man of Sorrows holds on his conquering way.

His victory will be seen in another form. He overcame the world as to *the unselfishness of his aims*. When men find themselves in a world like this they generally say, "What is our market? what can we make out of it?" This is how they are trained from childhood. "Boy, you have to fight your own way, mind you look to your own interests and rise in the world." The book which is commended to the young man shows him how to make the best use of all things for himself, he must take care of "number one," and mind the main chance. The boy is told by his wise instructors "you must look to yourself or nobody else will look to you : and whatever you may do for others, be doubly sure to guard your own interests." That is the world's prudence, the essence of all her politics, the basis of her political economy,—every man, and every nation must take care of themselves : if you wish for any other politics or economics you will be considered to be foolish theorists and probably a little touched in the head. Self is the man, the world's law of self-preservation is the sovereign rule, and nothing can go on rightly if you interfere with the gospel of selfishness ; so the commercial and political Solomons assure us. Now, look at the Lord Jesus Christ when he was in the world and you will learn nothing of such principles, except their condemnation : the world could not overcome him by leading him into a selfish mode of action. Did it ever enter into his soul, even for a moment, what he could do for himself ? There were riches, but he had not where to lay his head. The little store he had he committed to the trust of Judas, and as long as there were any poor in the land they were sure to share in what was in the bag. He set so little account by estate, and stock, and funds that no mention is made of such things by either of his four biographers. He had wholly and altogether risen above the world in that respect ; for with whatever evil the most spiteful infidels have ever charged our Lord they have never, to my knowledge, accused him of avarice, greed, or selfishness in any form. He had overcome the world.

Then again the Master overcame the world in that *he did not sloop to use its power*. He did not use that form of power which is peculiar to the world even for unselfish purposes. I can conceive a man even apart from the Spirit of God rising superior to riches, and desiring only the promotion of some great principle which has possessed his heart ; but you will usually notice that when men have done so, they have been ready to promote good by evil, or at least they have judged that great principles might be pushed on by force of arms, or bribes, or policy. Mahomet had grasped a grand truth when he said, "There is no God but God." The unity of the godhead is a truth of the utmost value ; but then here comes the means to be used for the propagation of this grand truth,—the scimitar. "Off with the infidels' heads ! If they have false gods, or will not own the unity of the godhead, they are not fit to live." Can you imagine our Lord Jesus Christ doing this ? Why then the world would have conquered him. But he conquered the world in that he would not employ in the slightest degree

this form of power. He might have gathered a troop about him, and his heroic example, together with his miraculous power, must soon have swept away the Roman empire, and converted the Jew; and then across Europe and Asia and Africa his victorious legions might have gone trampling down all manner of evil, and with the cross for his banner and the sword for his weapon, the idols would have fallen, and the whole world must have been made to bow at his feet. But no, when Peter takes out the sword, he says, "Put up thy sword into its sheath, they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Well did he say, "My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight."

And he might if he had pleased have allied his church with the state, as his mistaken friends have done in these degenerate times, and then there might have been penal laws against those who dared dissent, and there might have been forced contributions for the support of his church and such like things. You have read, I dare say, of such things being done, but not in the Gospels, nor in the Acts of the Apostles. These things are done by those who forget the Christ of God, for he uses no instrument but love, no sword but the truth, no power but the Eternal Spirit, and, in the very fact that he put all the worldly forces aside, he overcame the world.

So, brethren, he overcame the world by *his fearlessness of the world's elite*, for many a man who has braved the frowns of the multitude cannot bear the criticism of the few who think they have monopolized all wisdom. But Christ meets the Pharisee, and pays no honour to his phylactery; he confronts the Sadducee and yields not to his cold philosophy, neither does he conceal the difficulties of the faith to escape his sneer; and he braves also the Herodian, who is the worldly politician, and he gives him an unanswerable reply. He is the same before them all, master in all positions, overcoming the world's wisdom and supposed intelligence by his own simple testimony to the truth.

And he overcame the world in his life best of all *by the constancy of his love*. He loved the most unlovely men, he loved those who hated him, he loved those who despised him. You and I are readily turned aside from loving when we receive ungrateful treatment, and thus we are conquered by the world, but he kept to his great object—"he saved others, himself he could not save"; and he died with this prayer on his lips, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Not soured in the least, thou blessed Saviour, thou art at the last just as tender as at the first. We have seen fine spirits, full of generosity, who have had to deal with a crooked and perverse generation, until they have at last grown hard and cold. Nero, who weeps when he signs the first death warrant of a criminal, at last comes to gloat in the blood of his subjects. Thus do sweet flowers wither into noxious corruption. As for thee, thou precious Saviour, thou art ever fragrant with love. No spot comes upon thy lovely character, though thou dost traverse a miry road. Thou art as kind to men at thy departure as thou wast at thy coming, for thou hast overcome the world.

I can only say on the next point that *Christ by his death overcame the world* because, by a wondrous act of self-sacrifice, the Son of God

smote to the heart the principle of selfishness, which is the very soul and life-blood of the world. There, too, by redeeming fallen man he lifted man up from the power which the world exercises over him, for he taught men that they are redeemed, that they are no longer their own but bought with a price, and thus redemption became the note of liberty from the bondage of self-love, and the hammer which breaks the fetters of the world and the lusts thereof.

By reconciling men unto God through his great atonement, also he has removed them from the despair which else had kept them down in sin, and made them the willing slaves of the world. Now are they pardoned, and, being justified, they are made to be the friends of God, and being the friends of God they become enemies to God's enemies, and are separated from the world, and so the world by Christ's death is overcome.

But chiefly has he overcome *by his rising and his reigning*, for when he rose he bruised the serpent's head, and that serpent is the prince of this world, and hath dominion over it. Christ has conquered the world's prince and led him in chains, and now hath Christ assumed the sovereignty over all things here below. God hath put all things under his feet. At his girdle are the keys of providence; he ruleth amongst the multitude and in the council chambers of kings. As Joseph governed Egypt for the good of Israel, so doth Jehovah Jesus govern all things for the good of his people. Now the world can go no further in persecuting his people than he permits it. Not a martyr can burn, nor a confessor be imprisoned without the permit of Jesus Christ who is the Lord of all; for the government is upon his shoulders and his kingdom ruleth over all. Brethren, this is a great joy to us to think of the reigning power of Christ as having overcome the world.

There is yet this other thought that he has overcome the world *by the gift of the Holy Spirit*. That gift was practically the world's conquest. Jesus has set up a rival kingdom now: a kingdom of love and righteousness; already the world feels its power by the Spirit. I do not believe that there is a dark place in the centre of Africa which is not to some extent improved by the influence of Christianity; even the wilderness rejoices and is glad for him. No barbarous power dares to do what once it did, or if it does there is such a clamour raised against its cruelty that very soon it has to say *peccavi*, and confess its faults. This moment the stone cut out of the mountain without hands has begun to smite old Dagon, it is breaking his head and breaking his hands and the very stump of him shall be dashed in pieces yet. There is no power in this world so vital, so potent as the power of Christ at this day. I say naught just now of heavenly or spiritual things; but I speak only of temporal and moral influences,—even in these the cross is to the front. He of whom Voltaire said that he lived in the twilight of his day, is going from strength to strength. It was true it was the twilight, but it was the twilight of the morning and the full noon is coming. Every year the name of Jesus brings more light to this poor world; every year hastens on the time when the cross which is the Pharos of humanity, the world's lighthouse amid the storm, shall shine forth more and more brightly over the troubled waters till the great calm shall come. The word shall become more and more universally

true, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Thus hath he overcome the world.

III. Now, lastly, WHAT CHEER IS THERE HERE FOR US? Why, this first, that if the man Christ Jesus has overcome the world at its worst, we who are in him shall overcome the world too through the same power which dwelt in him. He has put his life into his people, he has given his Spirit to dwell in them, and they shall be more than conquerors. He overcame the world when it attacked him in the worst possible shape, for he was poorer than any of you, he was more sick and sad than any of you, he was more despised and persecuted than any of you, and he was deprived of certain divine consolations which God has promised never to take away from his saints, and yet with all possible disadvantages Christ overcame the world : therefore be assured we shall conquer also by his strength.

Besides, he overcame the world when nobody else had overcome it. It was as it were a young lion which had never been defeated in fight : it roared upon him out of the thicket and leaped upon him in the fulness of its strength. Now if our greater Samson did tear this young lion as though it were a kid and fling it down as a vanquished thing, you may depend upon it that now it is an old lion, and grey and covered with the wounds which he gave it of old, we, having the Lord's life and power in us, will overcome it too. Blessed be his name ! What good cheer there is in his victory. He does as good as say to us, "I have overcome the world, and you in whom I dwell, who are clothed with my spirit, must overcome it too."

But then, next, remember he overcame the world as our Head and representative, and it may truly be said that if the members do not overcome, then the head has not perfectly gained the victory. If it were possible for the members to be defeated, why then, the head itself could not claim a complete victory, since it is one with the members. So Jesus Christ, our covenant Head and representative, in whose loins lay all the spiritual seed, conquered the world for us and we conquered the world in him. He is our Adam, and what was done by him was actually done for us and virtually done by us. Have courage then, for you must conquer ; it must happen to you as unto your head : where the head is shall the members be, and as the head is so must the members be : wherefore be assured of the palm branch and the crown.

And now, brethren, I ask you whether you have not found it so? Is it not true at this moment that the world is overcome in you? Does self govern you? Are you working to acquire wealth for your own aggrandisement? Are you living to win honour and fame among men? Are you afraid of men's frowns? Are you the slave of popular opinion? Do you do things because it is the custom to do them? Are you the slaves of fashion? If you are, you know nothing about this victory. But if you are true Christians I know what you can say : "Lord, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds ; henceforth the world hath no dominion over me ; and though it tempt me, and frighten me, and flatter me, yet still I rise superior to it by the power of thy Spirit, for the love of Christ constraineth me, and I live not unto myself and unto things that are seen, but unto Christ and to things invisible." If it be so, who has done this for you? Who but Christ

the Overcomer, who is formed in you the hope of glory : wherefore be of good cheer, for you have overcome the world by virtue of his dwelling in you.

So, brethren, let us go back to the world and its tribulations without fear. Its trials cannot hurt us. In the process we shall get good, as the wheat doth out of the threshing. Let us go forth to combat the world, for it cannot overcome us. There was never a man yet with the life of God in his soul whom the whole world could subdue ; nay, all the world and hell together cannot conquer the veriest babe in the family of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lo, ye are harnessed with salvation, ye are panoplied with omnipotence, your heads are covered with the ægis of the atonement, and Christ himself, the Son of God, is your captain. Take up your battle cry with courage, and fear not, for more is he that is for you than all they that be against you. It is said of the glorified saints, "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb"; "and this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith," wherefore be ye steadfast, even to the end, for ye shall be more than conquerors through him that hath loved you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xvi. 1—33.

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AT THE

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BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

On Monday Afternoon, December 4th, 1876.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS NEW.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 10TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."—2 Corinthians, v. 17.

WE shall try to preach this morning of Christ as the Author of the new creation, and may we be enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak to his glory. To create all things new is one of his most famous achievements; may we not only gaze upon it but be partakers in it.

What says Solomon in the Book of Ecclesiastes? Does he not tell us there that "the thing that hath been shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun"? No doubt Solomon was correct in this declaration, but he wrote of this world and not of the world to come whereof we speak; for behold, in the world to come, that is to say, in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, all things are new. To the wisest mind, if unrenewed, there is nothing new, but to the humblest of the regenerated ones all things have become new.

The word "new" seems to harmonize sweetly with the name and work of our Lord Jesus, inasmuch as he comes in after the old system had failed, and begins anew with us as the father and head of a chosen race. He is the Mediator of the new covenant, and has come to place us in a new relationship towards God. As the second Adam he has delivered us from the old broken covenant of works wherein we lay under the curse, and he hath placed us under the new infallible covenant of grace wherein we are established by his merit. The blood of Jesus Christ is said to be "the blood of the new covenant"; there is thus a connection with newness even in the most vital point of our dear Redeemer's person. The blood is even to him the life thereof, and apart from that blood he can bestow no remission of sin; thus there is a newness about that essential life-blood, for when he gives us to drink of his cup of remembrance he says "this is my blood of the *new* testament, which is shed for many

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for the remission of sins." "Now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." The old covenant, the old ceremonial law, the old spirit of bondage, and the whole of the old heaven Jesus has purged out of the house, and he has admitted to a new dispensation wherein grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

When our Lord Jesus came into the world his birth of a virgin by the power of the Holy Ghost was a new thing, for thus had the prophet Jeremiah said of old in the name of the Lord, "How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man." Unto us a child is born who is the virgin's son, in whom we do rejoice because he cometh into the world without taint of original sin, after a new fashion, as never man was born before. Coming thus into the old world, he publisheth new doctrine, for his doctrine is called gospel, or good news. It is the freshest news that an anxious heart can hear; it is the most novel music by which a troubled breast can be soothed. Jesus Christ's teaching is still the best news of these days, as it was centuries ago. Though the world has had nearly 1900 years of the glad tidings, the gospel hath the dew of its youth upon it, and when men hear it they still ask, as the Greeks did of old, "What new doctrine is this?" Our Lord Jesus has come to set up, by the preaching and teaching of the gospel, a new kingdom, a kingdom having new laws, new customs, a new charter, and new riches, a kingdom which is not of this world, a kingdom founded upon better principles and bringing infinitely better results to its subjects than any other dominion that hath ever been. Into that kingdom he introduces only new men, who are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, who therefore love his new commandment and serve him in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Moreover, Christ hath opened for us an entrance into the kingdom of heaven above, for now we come to God "by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." When in days to come we shall meet him again there will still be novelty, for he has said, "I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Indeed, concerning our Lord and Master everything is new, and was it not so prophesied? For did not Isaiah say, in the forty-third chapter, eighteenth verse, "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?" And to the same effect was his prophecy in the sixty-fifth chapter, seventeenth verse: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." This newness of everything was to be a leading feature in Messiah's reign, and it has already been so; but far more shall this be seen in the latter days. Doth not John in Rev. xxi. 5, say, "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Foretold in former ages as the Creator of new heavens and a new earth, our Lord shall at last, in the summing

up, be plainly seen to be the Maker of all things new. Do you wonder, beloved, that if a man be in Christ he is a new creature? If everything that Christ touches is made new, if he refreshes and revives, if he re-establishes and re-edifies, and new-creates wherever he goes, are you at all astonished that those who live nearest to his heart, nay, are in vital union with his blessed person, should also be made new? It would be very astonishing if it were not so.

Let us direct our attention then to the teaching of the text, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature."

I. We shall first consider with brevity THE GROUND OF THE NOVELTY which is here spoken of. It is, "If any man be *in Christ*, he is a new creature," not otherwise. No man cometh to be a new creature by any process apart from Christ. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," but if any man be not in Christ he is not a new creature, nor can he become so except by connection with him of whom it is written that he is "the beginning of the creation of God." As in the old creation "without him was not any thing made that was made," so is it in the new. He maketh all things new, but the things that are apart from him have waxen old and are ready to perish, neither can they renew their youth. As well might the face of the earth hope to be renewed with spring apart from the sun, as for a soul to hope for spiritual renewal apart from Jesus. The wonderful newness produced by regeneration and new creation is the work of the Holy Ghost and his operations are all in union with the Lord Jesus and aimed at his glory. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

But how cometh it that a man is indeed a new creature if he be in Christ? I answer, first, it cometh necessarily from *the representative character of Christ* towards those who are in him. If you wanted a man to be made a new creature, and were omnipotent, what process would suggest itself to you? I think a double one. To make an old creature into a new creature there must first be the stroke which ends him, and then the touch which begins him anew: to put it more plainly, there must be death and then life. Now, has that taken place upon those who are in Christ? Of course it has, if it has taken place upon Christ himself, because he is the Head, and represents the members. As Adam acted for the seed in him, so Christ hath acted for the seed in him. See, then, beloved, Christ hath died; he came before the judgment seat with our sins upon him, the representative of those of whom he is the head; and in him death, which was the penalty of sin, was fulfilled to the letter, its bitterest dregs being drunk up. Jesus died. We are certain that he died, for the executioners brake not his legs because they saw that he was dead already, but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. We know that he died, for the jealous eyes of his enemies would not have permitted him to have been taken down from the cross unless the life had assuredly departed. He was laid in the grave, assuredly dead, under the dominion of death for the time being; and you and I who are in him, at that time died in him. "If one died for all then can"

died." Such is the proper translation of that passage. We died, for he died in our name. Our sin, was punished in him by the death which he endured. See ye, then, brethren, we are dead, dead by virtue of our federal union with Jesus Christ. I mean not you all, unless ye are all in Christ Jesus. Judge ye whether it be so with you or not. But I mean as many as the Father gave to Christ, as many as Christ in his intent did specially redeem by becoming their substitute: these were in him, and in him they died, being crucified with him. In him also all his people rose again when he rose. On the third day he burst the bonds of death and left the grave on our behalf. See how the Holy Spirit, by his servant Paul, identifies us with all this. "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." As far as he was our representative he was a new man when he rose. The law had no claims upon him: he had been dead, and so had passed out of its jurisdiction. The law never had any claim upon the risen Christ: it had a claim upon him when he came under the law, but when he had satisfied it to the last jot and tittle, by death, he was completely clear. Hath the law of our country any claim upon a man after he is dead? If a dead man can be raised again all his past offences are done with, he beginneth a new life, and is not under the old law. And so with Christ and so with us, for here is the point of union, we are risen with him by faith of the resurrection of Christ. We have been dead and buried, and now we are risen, and thus this, which is the very best and surest process for making a person a new creature, has been undergone by all God's elect, by reason of the representative and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and his glorious representative resurrection on their behalf.

But, beloved, there is another meaning. *We are made new creatures by an actual process* as well as by the legal process which I have described, and here also the same thing is done. We are made vitally one with Jesus Christ when we believe in him, and then do we spiritually die and are made to live again. Our faith apprehends the dying of Christ, and we feel at the same time the sentence of death in ourselves. We see how we deserve to die for sin, and we accept the sentence, confessing our guiltiness before the Most High, and there is proclaimed throughout the powers and passions of the soul a decree from God that the flesh shall die, with all its lusts. We write down sin as henceforth dead to us, and ourselves as dead to it. We labour to mortify all our evil desires and the lusts of the flesh, and all that cometh of the flesh. When we believe in Jesus a sword goeth through the very loins of sin, and the arrows of the Lord stick fast in the hearts of the King's enemies that lurk within our spirit. There also cometh a new life into us as we behold Jesus risen from the dead. When we believe in Jesus we receive from God a new vital principle, of superior and heavenly character, akin to Deity: there droppeth into our soul a seed from the hand of the eternal Spirit, living and incorruptible,

which abideth for ever, and for ever bringeth forth fruit after its kind. As we believe in Christ living we live in Christ and live after the fashion of Christ, and the Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead dwelleth in our mortal bodies, making us to live in newness of life.

Now, beloved, do you know anything about this? Have you been made new creatures by death and resurrection? If you have been baptized you have professed that so it has been with you. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." In the ordinance of baptism, by burial in the water, and uprising from it, there is a setting forth as in a type and figure of our Lord's burial and resurrection, and at the same time it is an emblem of the process by which we become new creatures in him. But is it *really* so in your souls? Are you now henceforth dead to the world, and dead to sin, and quickened into the life of Christ? If you be so, then the text will bear to you a third and practical meaning, for it will not merely be true that your old man is condemned to die and a new nature is bestowed, but *in your common actions you will try to show this by newness of actual conversation*. Evils which tempted you at one time will be unable to beguile you now because you are dead to them: the charms of the painted face of the world will no longer attract your attention, for your eyes are blind to such deceitful beauties. You have obtained a new life which can only be satisfied by new delights, which can only be excited by new objects and constrained by new principles suitable to its own nature. This you will continually show. The life of God within you will make your actions instinct with holiness, and the end thereof shall be everlasting life. Your faith in Christ clearly evinces you to be a new creature, for it kills your old confidences and makes you build upon a new basis: your love to Christ also shows your newness, for it has slain your old affections, and captured your heart for Jesus only: and your hope, which is also a gift of the blessed Spirit, is set upon new things altogether, while your old hopes are things whereof you are now ashamed.

Thus it is that first by the headship of Christ you are legally dead and alive again; next by your vital union with Christ you are dead and alive again as a matter of experience, and now it is practically proven in your life from day to day that you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God: in all these three ways you are new creatures by the double process of dying and quickening. You are under a new Adam, and so start life afresh as new creatures; you are under a new covenant, and commence to act under different principles, and so are new creatures: you are quickened by a new Spirit, and so in thought and word and deed are seen to be new creatures. But all this is *in Christ*, and if you are not in Christ you are still in the old world which must shortly be destroyed. As "by the Word of God were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth," so have you been created by Jesus, the Eternal Word, and quickened by his

Spirit, or else you still abide in death. If your faith has never laid her hand upon Christ's sacrifice for sin then your soul has never felt the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, and all the baptismal regeneration and all else of human invention that may now comfort you is but a vain deceit. Ye must be born again, but it can only be in Christ Jesus, for to "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." O that we may all believe in him, and enter into the new life.

"Author of the new creation,
Come with all thy Spirit's power;
Make our hearts thy habitation,
On our souls thy graces shower."

II. I shall in the second place lead you to consider the **ESSENCE OF THIS NOVELTY**. "If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*." Read, and the reading will be accurate, "He is a new creation." This is a very sweeping statement. A man in Christ is not the old man purified, nor the old man improved, nor the old man in a better humour, nor the old man with additions and subtractions, nor the old man dressed in gorgeous robes. No, he is a new creature altogether. As for the old man, what is to be done with him? Can he not be sobered, reformed, and made to do us useful service? No, he is crucified with Christ, and bound to die by a lingering but certain death. The capital sentence is passed upon him, for he cannot be mended and therefore must be ended. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." You cannot change the old nature, it is immutably bad, and the sooner it is put away as a filthy and unclean thing the better for us. The believer, so far as he is in Christ, is a new creation: not the old stuff put into a new fashion, and the old material worked up into an improved form, but absolutely a new creation. To create is to make out of nothing, and that is precisely how the newborn life came into us; it is not a development, or an outgrowth, but a creation, a heavenly something called into being by a power from above. The new man in us is made out of nothing that was in us before, for nature does not assist grace but is opposed to it. Christ has not found light stored away in our darkness, nor life amid the corruption of our spiritual death. The new birth is from above, and the life produced thereby is a new creation, and not the goodness of nature educated till it becomes grace. They are getting up a notion in certain quarters that the children of pious parents, if not of all mankind, are the children of God by their first birth, and only want certain training and influences to be brought to bear upon them and then they will develop into Christians as they grow up into manhood and womanhood. One divine says that our children ought not to need conversion. This theory is false throughout, for the best of children are by nature heirs of wrath even as others. The grace of God in the soul is a new creation, and not the natural development of a pious education and training working upon the innate goodness of men: indeed there is no such goodness there at all; it is a dream altogether.

The new man in Christ is not the old creature washed and put out to school, and elevated by "modern thought and culture." No; the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots; do what you will with him he will be an Ethiopian and a leopard still; but the new man in Christ is another creature altogether.

Mark you, it is not said that the man has something new about him, but he, himself, is new. It is not merely that in a spiritual sense he has new eyes, new hands, and new feet, but he, he, he, he, himself, is a new creation. Mark that. Do you not see then that salvation is the work of God? You cannot create yourself, and you cannot create anything at all. Try and create a fly first, and then you may dream of being able to create a new heart and a right spirit in another person, but even then it would be quite another matter to new create yourself. Is not the very idea an absurdity? Shall nothing create something? Shall darkness create light? Shall sin create holiness? Shall death create life? Shall the devil create God? None of these questions are more absurd than the idea of the sinner's being able to new create himself.

No, beloved, regeneration is an extraordinary work, demanding omnipotence to accomplish it; it is, in fact, a divine work, for it is the supreme prerogative of God to create.

"Know that the Lord is God alone,
He can create, and he destroy."

If any man be in Christ it is not only said that he is a creation, but a *new* creation, and the word here translated "new," as has been well observed, does not signify *recent*, but something altogether different from that which previously existed. A book may be new, and yet it may be only a fresh copy of some old work; but that is not the case in this instance. The creature is not a new specimen of the same kind as the old, but another and different creation. We might almost read the text as if it said, "If any man be in Christ he is a fresh creation, a new kind of creature altogether." The new creation differs essentially from the old, although the first is an instructive emblem of the second. The first creation was the work of physical power, the second a work of spiritual power: the first created for the most part materialism in its various forms, but the new creation deals with spiritual things, and manifests the sublimest attributes of the divine character. God in nature is glorious, but in grace he is all glorious. The second is a creation nearer to the heart of God than the first creation was; for when he made the world he simply said it was good, but when he makes the new creation, it is written, "He shall rest in his love; he shall rejoice over thee with singing." So gladdening to his heart is the sight of the new creature which his grace hath made, that he sings a joyful hymn.

Furthermore, we must note that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, and the creation of him bears some resemblance to the creation of the world. I have at other times gone through that wonderful first chapter of the Book of Genesis, which is a Bible in miniature, and I have shown you how it sets forth the spiritual creation. Behold by nature we lie like chaos: a mass of disorder, confusion, and darkness. As in the old creation so in the new, the Spirit of God broodeth

over us and moveth upon the face of all things. Then the word of the Lord comes and says within us, as aforetime in chaos and old night, "Let there be light," and there is light. After light there comes a division of the light from the darkness, and we learn to call them by their names. The light is "day" and the darkness is "night." So to us there is a knowing and a naming of things, and a discerning of differences in matters which before we confounded when we put light for darkness. After a while there cometh forth in us the lower forms of spiritual life. As in the earth there came grasses and herbs, so in us there come desire, hope, and sorrow for sin. By-and-by there appeared on the globe fowl and fish, and beasts, and living things, and life beyond all count. So also in the new creation, from having life we go on to have it more abundantly. God by degrees created all his works, till at last he had finished all the host of them, and even so he works on till he completes in us the new creation and looks upon us with rejoicing. Then he bringeth to us a day of rest, blessing us and causing us to enter into his rest because of his finished work. We could draw a very beautiful parallel if we had time, but you can think it out for yourselves.

Now, notice very carefully that if *any man* be in Christ he is a new creature, and this certifies that a new creation has taken place upon every man who is in Christ, whether by nature he was a Jew or Gentile, a moralist or a rake, a philosopher or a fool. When a man is converted and brought to Christ he has invariably become a new creature. If he has believed in Jesus only three minutes yet he is a new creature; and if he hath known the Lord seventy years he can be no more. A new creation is a new creature, and in this matter there is no difference between the babe in grace and the father in Israel.

As this creation is common to all the saints, so is it *immediate and present*. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature": it is not spoken of as a something that is to happen to him in the last article of death, wherein some seem to hope that many wonderful changes will be wrought in them; but he who is in Christ is a new creature *now*. "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but a new creature": and that new creature is *now* possessed, and I may add consciously possessed too: for albeit that there may arise occasional doubts upon this question, yet in a man's inmost self he finds cause to know that there has passed upon him a marvellous change which only God himself could have wrought.

This change is *universal in the man*; the new man is not full grown in every part, nor in fact in any part, and yet in all the portions of his regenerated nature he is a new creature. I mean this, if any man be in Christ it is not his mental *eye* that is a new creation merely, but he himself is a new creation. He has a new heart according to the promise, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." He hath new ears, hearing what he refused to hear before; he has a new tongue, and can pray with it as he never prayed before; he has new feet, and these delight to run in the ways of God's commandments. I refer of course only to his inner man, that is altogether new, and not any one part of it only. If a man be merely enlightened in understanding, what is that? It is good, but it is not salvation; a new brain is not all that is wanted to make a new man. A new man

is spiritually new-created from head to foot. Though but a babe in grace, and not fully developed in any one part, yet he is new, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Thus have I tried to show you the essence of the novelty.

III. Let us next consider THE EXTENT OF THE NOVELTY. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; *old things are passed away, behold all things have become new.*" It seems then that not only is the man a new creature, but he has entered into a new creation; he has opened his eyes in a new world. Imagine Adam falling asleep at the gates of Paradise just under the oherubim's flaming sword, with the thorns and thistles springing up before him, and the serpent's trail behind him: and then further picture him lying there in a deep sleep till the Lord touches him, makes him open his eyes, and causes him to find himself in a better paradise than the one he had lost. It was not so in reality, but can you imagine such a thing? If so, it may serve as a symbol of what the Lord has done for us. We are made new, and find ourselves in a new world.

What about *the old things*? The text says they have passed away, and the Greek word gives the idea of their having passed away spontaneously. I cannot liken it to anything that I know of better than the snow which melts in the sun. You wake up one morning, and all the trees are festooned with snowy wreaths, while down below upon the ground the snow lies in a white sheet over everything. Lo, the sun has risen, its beams shed a genial warmth; and in a few hours where is the snow? It has passed away. Had you hired a thousand carts and horses and machines to sweep it away it could not have been more effectually removed. It has passed away. That is what the Lord does in the new creation: his love shines on the soul, his grace renews us, and the old things pass away as a matter of course. Where are your old views about which you used to be so positive? Where are those old opinions for which you could freely have knocked a man down? Where are those old sneers against God's people? Where are those old pleasures which you took so much delight in? Where are those old engrossing pursuits? Had you a hard tug to get away from these bonds? Where are those old joys, those old hopes, those old trusts, those old confidences? Was it difficult to shake off these? Ah, no! Beneath the power of the Holy Spirit they have passed away. You hardly know how it is, but they have gone, and gone completely. As a dream when one awaketh you have despised their image, and your heart knows them no more. It is marvellous in this new creation how the Lord makes confusion and old night to fly. You may call for them and say, "Chaos, where art thou?" and no answer comes back, for old things are passed away. Our Lord Jesus Christ causes all this. Where his blessed face beams with grace and truth, as the sun with warmth and light, he dissolves the bands of sin's long frost, and brings on the spring of grace with newness of buds and flowers.

But when you remove the old what is to take its place? Do you not observe that *new things have come*, "Behold all things are become new." Now the man has new views, new notions, new ambitions, new convictions, new desires, new hopes, new dreads, new aims, new

principles, and new affections : he is led by a new spirit and follows a new course of life ; everything in fact about him is as if he had come fresh from the hand of God. Even as with the cleansed leper, his flesh came again to him as the flesh of a little child, and he was clean, so is it with the heart renewed by grace.

Beloved, it is delightful to read in the Book of the Revelation and anticipate the things which are to be hereafter. How full that book is of novelties which illustrate our subject, for there you read of a *new name* which the Lord bestows upon those who overcome. Perhaps some of you used actually to be known by some nickname or vulgar epithet while you lived in the world and were a lover of it. Now in all probability you are called by quite a different name among your Christian friends. Saul the persecutor is called Paul when he becomes an apostle. Moreover, there is a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. You have been named with the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and you wear henceforth that name by which the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Grace also has taught you a *new song*, "He hath put a new song into my mouth and established my goings." You are rehearsing the music of that glorious band of whom it is written, "They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof." Now are you a citizen of a *new city*, the new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from God, which shall be established among the sons of men, in the last days as the world's metropolis, concerning which they shall say, "The temple of God is with men and he doth dwell among them."

Beloved, each one of you has now become part of *one new man*. Do you know what I mean by that ? There were once the Jews and the Gentiles, but now, saith Paul, Christ "hath broken down the middle wall of partition ; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." The mystical body of Christ is the one new man, and we are members of that body. Henceforth we have communion with all saints, and to us "there is neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all." Even now we have commenced to live in a new heaven and walk upon a new earth, and we are anticipating the time when literally on this very earth whereon we have struggled there shall be set up a new condition of things, for the first heaven and the first earth shall have passed away and there shall be no more sea. Rolled up like a scroll shall yon blue heavens be, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, to which in expectation we are always drawing near, and pressing forward with inward yearning, for already in Christ Jesus we are a part of that new creation which is more fully to be revealed.

IV. Fourthly let us consider THE RESULT OF THIS NOVELTY. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Well, the result of this novelty is, first, that the man is already a great wonder to himself. You know the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls, the soul passing first into one body and then into another, and so existing under different conditions. We do not believe that fiction for a moment, but

if it had been true, the memories of such souls must have been stored with varied information, surpassingly strange to hear. Ours is another transformation, it is death and resurrection : the old passing away and the new being created : but how remarkable are the experiences of the men who have been so transformed ! Here is a man who is a new creature, and he has a very distinct recollection of the time when he was something far other than he now is. What a change he has undergone ! Suppose a swine could suddenly be turned into a man and yet recollect what it did when it was one of the herd ; what an experience it would have to tell ! If you could take a hog from the trough and turn it into an emperor, that would not be half so great a change as is accomplished when an unregenerated sinner becomes a saint ; but I warrant you the emperor would not find much cause for glorifying in his former swinish state ; he would be silent and ashamed when others mentioned it. If he alluded to that state it would always be with the blushes of humiliation and the tears of gratitude. If anybody began to talk about it, and he knew that there might be others about him that might be helped by hearing what the Lord had done, he would begin to tell in a gentle, modest way how the Lord transformed him from a swine into a monarch, but he would never, never boast : how could he ? In such a case the poor swine would have no responsibility, and could not be blamed for wallowing in the mire, but this cannot be said of us ; for when we acted as swine we knew better, and sinned wilfully. Still, what a change it is ! How I wonder at myself ! How I marvel at the goodness of my God ! How I adore that sacred power which has made me the child of two births, the subject of two creations : he first made me in the fashion of a man, and then made me in the image of the man Christ Jesus. I was first born to die, and then born to live eternally. Let us bless God and be full of lowly wonder this morning.

The next result of this new creation is, however, that the man does not feel at home in this present evil world, for this is the old creation, and the new man, the twice-born man, feels as if he were out of his element and not in a congenial country. He dwells in a body which is nothing better than a frail, uncomfortable, easily removed tent, in which he groans, earnestly desiring to enter his own house at home, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Wherever he goes things seem out of order with the rule which is set up in his soul. He loves not the world, neither the things in the world ; the world's glories do not charm him, and its treasures do not enchant him. Earth's music grates upon his refined ear, which is tuned to heavenly harmony ; its dainties do not delight the taste, which has learned to enjoy the bread of heaven. The new creatures pine to be in the new creation. And beloved, while we are pining we are preparing : the Spirit of God is working us to this selfsame thing, and filling us with groans and pangs of strong desire, which indicate that we are becoming more and more fit to be partakers with the saints in light, who see the face of the Beloved without a veil, and drink in ever new delights.

Mark you once more, while the new creature is thus watching and waiting for the new creation he is meanwhile extending an influence more or less unconscious over the old world in which he dwells. Just as our Lord has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us, so we, his people,

are stopping here to prepare a place for him. We are winning men from the world to Christ, we are raising the tone of morals, we are spreading light and truth on all sides by the power of the Spirit, and so we are helping to make the world readier to receive the great King. We are seeking out his jewels, we are bringing his rebellious subjects to his feet. The life that is in us seems out of place in this mortal frame, for the body is dead because of sin, and therefore we groan, being burdened. As for the world itself, it is not our rest, for it is polluted. It seems a dreadful thing for the living Spirit to be dwelling in this graveyard of a world, but there is a necessity for us to be here. We are linked with a creation made subject to vanity, because it was thus subjected, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope that the creation itself also "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." We are here as links between the spiritual and the material, and we are working out divine purposes for the fuller display of the divine glory. Wherefore comfort one another with these words, and as new creatures in Jesus Christ look for the new heavens and the new earth, and for the coming of your Lord and Saviour. Know ye not that when he shall appear then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Let us even now bow before him and salute him with the language of our hymn.

"To thee the world its treasure brings;
To thee its mighty bow;
To thee the church exulting springs;
Her Sovereign, Saviour Thou!

"Beneath thy touch, beneath thy smile,
New heavens and earth appear;
No sin their beauty to defile,
Nor dim them with a tear."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Cor. iv. 17, 18; v.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—907, 391, 474.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST THE DESTROYER OF DEATH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 17TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."—1 Cor. xv. 26.

DURING four previous Sabbaths we have been following our Lord and Master through his great achievements: we have seen him as the end of the law, as the conqueror of Satan, as the overcomer of the world, as the creator of all things new, and now we behold him as the destroyer of death. In this and in all his other glorious deeds let us worship him with all our hearts.

May the Spirit of God lead us into the full meaning of this, which is one of the Redeemer's grandest characters.

How wonderfully is our Lord Jesus *one with man*! For when the Psalmist David had considered "the heavens the work of God's fingers," he said, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" He was speaking of Christ. You would have thought he was thinking of man in his humblest estate, and that he was wondering that God should be pleased to honour so frail a being as the poor fallen son of Adam. You would never have dreamed that the glorious gospel lay hid within those words of grateful adoration. Yet in the course of that meditation David went on to say, "Thou madest him to have dominion over all the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet." Now, had it not been for the interpretation of the Holy Spirit, we should still have considered that he was speaking of men in general, and of man's natural dominion over the brute creation, but behold while that is true, there is another and a far more important truth concealed within it, for David, as a prophet, was all the while chiefly speaking of the man of men, the model man, the second Adam, the head of the new race of men. It was of Jesus, the Son of man, as honoured of the Father, that the psalmist sang, "He hath put all things under his feet." Strange, was it not, that when he spake of man he must of necessity speak also of our Lord? And yet, when we consider the thing, it is but natural and

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according to truth, and only remarkable to us because in our minds we too often consider Jesus and man as far removed, and too little regard him as truly one with man.

Now, see how the apostle infers from the psalm the necessity of the resurrection, for if all things must be put under the feet of the man Christ Jesus, then every form of evil must be conquered by him, and death among the rest. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." It must be so, and therefore death itself must ultimately be overcome. Thus out of that simple sentence in the psalm, which we should have read far otherwise without the light of the Holy Spirit, the apostle gathereth the doctrine of the resurrection. The Holy Spirit taught his servant Paul how by a subtle chemistry he could distil from simple words a precious fragrant essence, which the common reader never suspected to be there. Texts have their secret drawers, their box within a box, their hidden souls which lie asleep till he who placed them on their secret couches awakens them that they may speak to the hearts of his chosen. Could you ever have guessed resurrection from the eighth Psalm? No, nor could you have believed, had it not been told you, that there is fire in the flint, oil in the rock, and bread in the earth we tread upon. Man's books have usually far less in them than we expect, but the book of the Lord is full of surprises, it is a mass of light, a mountain of priceless revelations. We little know what yet lies hidden within the Scriptures. We know the form of sound words as the Lord has taught it to us, and by it we will abide, but there are inner store-houses into which we have not peered; chambers of revelation lit up with bright lamps, perhaps too bright for our eyes at this present. If Paul, when the Spirit of God rested upon him, could see so much in the songs of David, the day may come when we also shall see still more in the epistles of Paul, and wonder at ourselves that we did not understand better the things which the Holy Ghost has so freely spoken to us by the apostle. May we at this time be enabled to look deep and far, and behold the sublime glories of our risen Lord.

To the text itself then: *death is an enemy: death is an enemy to be destroyed: death is an enemy to be destroyed last*:—"the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

I. DEATH AN ENEMY. *It was so born*, even as Haman the Agagite was the enemy of Israel by his descent. Death is the child of our direst foe, for "sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." "Sin entered into the world and death by sin." Now, that which is distinctly the fruit of transgression cannot be other than an enemy of man. Death was introduced into the world on that gloomy day which saw our fall, and he that had the power of it is our arch enemy and betrayer, the devil: from both of which facts we must regard it as the manifest enemy of man. Death is an alien in this world, it did not enter into the original design of the unfallen creation, but its intrusion mars and spoils the whole. It is no part of the Great Shepherd's flock, but it is a wolf which cometh to kill and to destroy. Geology tells us that there was death among the various forms of life from the first ages of the globe's history, even when as yet the world was not fitted up as the dwelling of man. This I can believe and still regard death as the result

of sin. If it can be proved that there is such an organic unity between man and the lower animals that they would not have died if Adam had not sinned, then I see in those deaths before Adam the antecedent consequences of a sin which was then uncommitted. If by the merits of Jesus there was salvation before he had offered his atoning sacrifice I do not find it hard to conceive that the forscen demerits of sin may have cast the shadow of death over the long ages which came before man's transgression. Of that we know little, nor is it important that we should, but certain is it that as far as this present creation is concerned death is not God's invited guest, but an intruder whose presence mars the feast. Man in his folly welcomed Satan and sin when they forced their way into the high festival of Paradise, but he never welcomed death : even his blind eyes could see in that skeleton form a cruel foe. As the lion to the herds of the plain, as the scythe to the flowers of the field, as the wind to the sere leaves of the forest, such is death to the sons of men. They fear it by an inward instinct because their conscience tells them that it is the child of their sin.

Death is well called an enemy for *it does an enemy's work* towards us. For what purpose doth an enemy come but to root up, and to pull down, and to destroy ? Death tears in pieces that comely handiwork of God, the fabric of the human body, so marvellously wrought by the fingers of divine skill. Casting this rich embroidery into the grave among the armies of the worm, to its fierce soldiery death divideth "to every one a prey of divers colours, of divers colours of needlework"; and they ruthlessly rend in pieces the spoil. This building of our manhood is a house fair to look upon, but death the destroyer darkens its windows, shakes its pillars, closes its doors and causes the sound of the grinding to cease. Then the daughters of music are brought low, and the strong men bow themselves. This Vandal spares no work of life, however full of wisdom, or beauty, for it looseth the silver cord and breaketh the golden bowl. Lo, at the fountain the costly pitcher is utterly broken, and at the cistern the well-wrought wheel is dashed in pieces. Death is a fierce invader of the realms of life, and where it comes it fells every good tree, stops all wells of water, and mars every good piece of land with stones. See you a man when death has wrought his will upon him, what a ruin he is ! How is his beauty turned to ashes, and his comeliness to corruption. Surely an enemy hath done this.

Look, my brethren, at the course of death throughout all ages and in all lands. What field is there without its grave ? What city without its cemetery ? Whither can we go to find no sepulchres ? As the sandy shore is covered with the upcastings of the worm, so art thou, O earth, covered with those grass-grown hillocks beneath which sleep the departed generations of men. And thou, O sea, even thou, art not without thy dead ! As if the earth were all too full of corpses and they jostled each other in their crowded sepulchres, even into thy caverns, O mighty main, the bodies of the dead are cast. Thy waves must become defiled with the carcases of men, and on thy floor must lie the bones of the slain ! Our enemy, death, has marched as it were with sword and fire ravaging the human race. Neither Goth, nor Hun, nor Tartar could have slain so universally all that breathed, for death has suffered none to escape. Everywhere it has withered household joys

and created sorrow and sighing; in all lands where the sun is seen it hath blinded men's eyes with weeping. The tear of the bereaved, the wail of the widow, and the moan of the orphan—these have been death's war music, and he has found therein a song of victory.

The greatest conquerors have only been death's slaughtermen, journey-men butchers working in his shambles. War is nothing better than death holding carnival, and devouring his prey a little more in haste than is his common wont.

Death has done the work of an enemy to those of us who have as yet escaped his arrows. Those who have lately stood around a new-made grave and buried half their hearts can tell you what an enemy death is. It takes the friend from our side, and the child from our bosom, neither does it care for our crying. He has fallen who was the pillar of the household; she has been snatched away who was the brightness of the hearth. The little one is torn out of its mother's bosom though its loss almost breaks her heartstrings; and the blooming youth is taken from his father's side though the parent's fondest hopes are thereby crushed. Death has no pity for the young and no mercy for the old; he pays no regard to the good or to the beautiful. His scythe cuts down sweet flowers and noxious weeds with equal readiness. He cometh into our garden, trampleth down our lilies and scattereth our roses on the ground; yea, and even the most modest flowers planted in the corner, and hiding their beauty beneath the leaves that they may blush unseen, death spieth out even these, and cares nothing for their fragrance, but withers them with his burning breath. He is thine enemy indeed, thou fatherless child, left for the pitiless storm of a cruel world to beat upon, with none to shelter thee. He is thine enemy, O widow, for the light of thy life is gone, and the desire of thine eyes has been removed with a stroke. He is thine enemy, husband, for thy house is desolate and thy little children cry for their mother of whom death has robbed thee.

He is the enemy of us all, for what head of a family among us has not had to say to him, "Me thou hast bereaved again and again!" Especially is death an enemy to the living when he invades God's house and causes the prophet and the priest to be numbered with the dead. The church mourns when her most useful ministers are smitten down, when the watchful eye is closed in darkness, and the instructive tongue is mute. Yet how often does death thus war against us! The earnest, the active, the indefatigable are taken away. Those mightiest in prayer, those most affectionate in heart, those most exemplary in life, those are cut down in the midst of their labours, leaving behind them a church which needs them more than tongue can tell. If the Lord does but threaten to permit death to seize a beloved pastor, the souls of his people are full of grief, and they view death as their worst foe, while they plead with the Lord and entreat him to bid their minister live.

Even *those who die* may well count death to be their enemy: I mean not now that they have risen to their seats, and, as disembodied spirits, behold the King in his beauty, but aforetime while death was approaching them. He seemed to their trembling flesh to be a foe, for it is not in nature, except in moments of extreme pain or aberration of mind, or of excessive expectation of glory, for us to be in love with death. It was wise of our Creator so to constitute us that the soul loves the

body and the body loves the soul, and they desire to dwell together as long as they may, else had there been no care for self-preservation, and suicide would have destroyed the race.

"For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?"

It is a first law of our nature that skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life, and thus we are nerved to struggle for existence, and to avoid that which would destroy us. This useful instinct renders death an enemy, but it also aids in keeping us from that crime of all crimes the most sure of damnation if a man commit it wilfully and in his sound mind; I mean the crime of self-murder.

When death cometh even to the good man he cometh as an enemy, for he is attended by such terrible heralds and grim outriders as do greatly scare us.

"Fever with brow of fire;
Consumption wan; palsy, half-warmed with life,
And half a clay-cold lump; joint-torturing gout,
And ever-gnawing rheum; convulsion wild;
Swoln dropsy; panting asthma; apoplex
Full gorged."

None of these add to the aspect of death a particle of beauty. He comes with pains and griefs; he comes with sighs and tears. Clouds and darkness are round about him, an atmosphere laden with dust oppresses those whom he approaches, and a cold wind chills them even to the marrow. He rides on the pale horse, and where his steed sets its foot the land becomes a desert. By the footfall of that terrible steed the worm is awakened to gnaw the slain. When we forget other grand truths and only remember these dreadful things, death is the king of terrors to us. Hearts are sickened and reins are loosened, because of him.

But, indeed, he is an enemy, for what comes he to do to our body? I know he doeth that which ultimately leadeth to its betterness, but still it is that which in itself, and for the present, is not joyous, but grievous. He comes to take the light from the eyes, the hearing from the ears, the speech from the tongue, the activity from the hand, and the thought from the brain. He comes to transform a living man into a mass of putrefaction, to degrade the beloved form of brother and friend to such a condition of corruption that affection itself cries out, "Bury my dead out of my sight." Death, thou child of sin, Christ hath transformed thee marvellously, but in thyself thou art an enemy before whom flesh and blood tremble, for they know that thou art the murderer of all of woman born, whose thirst for human prey the blood of nations cannot slake.

If you think for a few moments of this enemy, you will observe some of his points of character. He is the *common* foe of all God's people, and the enemy of all men; for however some have been persuaded that they should not die, yet is there no discharge in this war; and if in this conscription a man escapes the ballot many and many a year till his grey beard seems to defy the winter's hardest frost, yet must the man of

iron yield at last. It is appointed unto all men once to die. The strongest man has no elixir of eternal life wherewith to renew his youth amid the decays of age: nor has the wealthiest prince a price wherewith to bribe destruction. To the grave must thou descend, O crowned monarch, for sceptres and shovels are akin. To the sepulchre must thou go down, O mighty man of valour, for sword and spade are of like metal. The prince is brother to the worm, and must dwell in the same house. Of our whole race it is true, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Death is also a *subtle* foe, lurking everywhere, even in the most harmless things. Who can tell where death has not prepared his ambuscades? He meets us both at home and abroad; at the table he assails men in their food, and at the fountain he poisons their drink. He waylayeth us in the streets, and he seizeth us in our beds; he rideth on the storm at sea, and he walks with us when we are on our way upon the solid land. Whither can we fly to escape from thee, O death, for from the summit of the Alps men have fallen to their graves, and in the deep places of the earth where the miner goeth down to find the precious ore, there hast thou sacrificed many a hecatomb of precious lives. Death is a subtle foe, and with noiseless footfalls follows close at our heels when least we think of him.

He is an enemy whom *none of us will be able to avoid*, take what by-paths we may, nor can we escape from him when our hour is come. Into this fowler's nets, like the birds, we shall all fly; in his great *seins* must all the fishes of the great sea of life be taken when their day is come. As surely as sets the sun, or as the midnight stars at length descend beneath the horizon, or as the waves sink back into the sea, or as the bubble bursts, so must we all early or late come to our end, and disappear from earth to be known no more among the living.

Sudden too, full often, are the assaults of this enemy.

"Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!"

Such things have happened as for men to die without an instant's notice; with a psalm upon their lips they have passed away; or engaged in the daily business they have been summoned to give in their account. We have heard of one who, when the morning paper brought him news that a friend in business had died, was drawing on his boots to go to his counting-house, and observed with a laugh that as far as he was concerned, he was so busy he had no time to die. Yet, ere the words were finished, he fell forward and was a corpse. Sudden deaths are not so uncommon as to be marvels if we dwell in the centre of a large circle of mankind. Thus is death a foe not to be despised or trifled with. Let us remember all his characteristics, and we shall not be inclined to think lightly of the grim enemy whom our glorious Redeemer has destroyed.

II. Secondly, let us remember that death is AN ENEMY TO BE DESTROYED. Remember that our Lord Jesus Christ has already wrought a great victory upon death so that he has delivered us from lifelong ^{age} through its fear. He has not yet *destroyed death*, but he has

gone very near to it, for we are told that he has "abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." This surely must come very near to having destroyed death altogether.

In the first place, our Lord has subdued death in the very worst sense by having delivered his people from spiritual death. "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Once you had no divine life whatever, but the death of original depravity remained upon you, and so you were dead to all divine and spiritual things; but now, beloved, the Spirit of God, even he that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, has raised you up into newness of life, and you have become new creatures in Christ Jesus. In this sense death has been subdued.

Our Lord in his lifetime also conquered death by restoring certain individuals to life. There were three memorable cases in which at his bidding the last enemy resigned his prey. Our Lord went into the ruler's house, and saw the little girl who had lately fallen asleep in death, around whom they wept and lamented: he heard their scornful laughter, when he said, "She is not dead but sleepeth," and he put them all out and said to her "Maid, arise!" Then was the spoiler spoiled, and the dungeon door set open. He stopped the funeral procession at the gates of Nain, whence they were carrying forth a young man, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow," and he said "Young man, I say unto thee arise." When that young man sat up and our Lord delivered him to his mother, then again was the prey taken from the mighty. Chief of all when Lazarus had laid in the grave so long that his sister said "Lord, by this time he stinketh," when, in obedience to the word, "Lazarus come forth!" forth came the raised one with his grave-clothes still about him, but yet really quickened, then was death seen to be subservient to the Son of man. "Loose him and let him go," said the conquering Christ, and death's bonds were removed, for the lawful captive was delivered. When at the Redeemer's resurrection many of the saints arose and came out of their graves into the holy city then was the crucified Lord proclaimed to be victorious over death and the grave.

Still, brethren, these were but preliminary skirmishes and mere foreshadowings of the grand victory by which death was overthrown. The real triumph was achieved upon the cross,—

"He hell in hell laid low;
Made sin, He sin o'erthrew:
Bow'd to the grave, destroy'd it so,
And death, by dying, slew."

When Christ died he suffered the penalty of death on the behalf of all his people, and therefore no believer now dies by way of punishment for sin, since we cannot dream that a righteous God would twice exact the penalty for one offence. Death since Jesus died is not a penal infliction upon the children of God: as such he has abolished it, and it can never be enforced. Why die the saints then? Why, because their bodies must be changed ere they can enter heaven. "Flesh and blood" as they are "cannot inherit the kingdom of God." A divine change must take place upon the body before it will be fit for incorruption and glory; and death and the grave are, as it were, the refining pot and the furnace

by means of which the body is made ready for its future bliss. Death, it is true thou art not yet destroyed, but our living Redeemer has so changed thee that thou art no longer death, but something other than thy name! Saints die not now, but they are dissolved and depart. Death is the loosing of the cable that the bark may freely sail to the fair havens. Death is the fiery chariot in which we ascend to God : it is the gentle voice of the Great King, who cometh into his banqueting hall, and saith "Friend, come up higher." Behold, on eagle's wings we mount, we fly, far from this land of mist and cloud, into the eternal serenity and brilliance of God's own house above. Yes, our Lord has abolished death. The sting of death is sin, and our great Substitute has taken that sting away by his great sacrifice. Stingless, death abides among the people of God, but it so little harms them that to them "it is not death to die."

Further, Christ vanquished death and thoroughly overcame him when he rose. What a temptation one has to paint a picture of the resurrection, but I will not be led aside to attempt more than a few touches. When our great Champion awoke from his brief sleep of death and found himself in the withdrawing-room of the grave, he quietly proceeded to put off the garments of the tomb. How leisurely he proceeded ! He folded up the napkin and placed it by itself, that those who lose their friends might wipe their eyes therewith ; and then he took off the winding sheet and laid the graveclothes by themselves that they might be there when his saints come thither, so that the chamber might be well furnished, and the bed ready sheeted and prepared for their rest. The sepulchre is no longer an empty vault, a dreary charnel, but a chamber of rest, a dormitory furnished and prepared, hung with the arras which Christ himself has bequeathed. It is now no more a damp, dark, dreary prison : Jesus has changed all that.

" 'Tis now a cell where angels use
To come and go with heavenly news."

The angel from heaven rolled away the stone from our Lord's sepulchre and let in the fresh air and light again upon our Lord, and he stepped out more than a conqueror. Death had fled. The grave had capitulated.

"Lives again our glorious King!
'Where, O death, is now thy sting?'
Once he died our souls to save;
'Where's thy victory, boasting grave?'"

Well, brethren, as surely as Christ rose so did he guarantee as an absolute certainty the resurrection of all his saints into a glorious life for their bodies, the life of their souls never having paused even for a moment. In this he conquered death ; and since that memorable victory, every day Christ is overcoming death, for he gives his Spirit to his saints, and having that Spirit within them they meet the last enemy without alarm : often they confront him with songs, perhaps more frequently they face him with calm countenance, and fall asleep with peace. I will not fear thee, death, why should I ? Thou lookest like a dragon, but thy sting is gone. Thy teeth are broken, oh lion, wherefore should I fear thee ? I know thou art no more able

to destroy me, but thou art sent as a messenger to conduct me to the golden gate wherein I shall enter and see my Saviour's unveiled face for ever. Expiring saints have often said that their last beds have been the best they have ever slept upon. Many of them have enquired,

"Tell me, my soul, can this be death?"

To die has been so different a thing from what they expected it to be, so lightsome, and so joyous; they have been so unloaded of all care, have felt so relieved instead of burdened, that they have wondered whether this could be the monster they had been so afraid of all their days. They find it a pin's prick, whereas they feared it would prove a sword-thrust: it is the shutting of the eye on earth and the opening of it in heaven, whereas they thought it would have been a stretching upon the rack, or a dreary passage through a dismal region of gloom and dread. Beloved, our exalted Lord has overcome death in all these ways.

But now, observe, that this is not the text:—the text speaks of something yet to be done. The last enemy that *shall be* destroyed is death, so that death in the sense meant by the text is not destroyed yet. He is to be destroyed, and how will that be?

Well, I take it death will be destroyed in the sense first that, at the coming of Christ, *those who are alive and remain shall not see death*. They shall be changed; there must be a change even to the living before they can inherit eternal life, but they shall not actually die. Do not envy them, for they will have no preference beyond those that sleep; rather do I think theirs to be the inferior lot of the two in some respects. But they will not know death: the multitude of the Lord's own who will be alive at his coming will pass into the glory without needing to die. Thus death, as far as they are concerned, will be destroyed.

But the sleeping ones, the myriads who have left their flesh and bones to moulder back to earth, death shall be destroyed even as to them, for when the trumpet sounds they shall rise from the tomb. *The resurrection is the destruction of death*. We never taught, nor believed, nor thought that every particle of every body that was put into the grave would come to its fellow, and that the absolutely identical material would rise; but we do say that the identical body will be raised, and that as surely as there cometh out of the ground the seed that was put into it, though in very different guise, for it cometh not forth as a seed but as a flower, so surely shall the same body rise again. The same material is not necessary, but there shall come out of the grave, ay, come out of the earth, if it never saw a grave, or come out of the sea if devoured by monsters, that selfsame body for true identity which was inhabited by the soul while here below. Was it not so with our Lord? Even so shall it be with his own people, and then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory!"

There will be this feature in our Lord's victory, that death will be fully destroyed because *those who rise will not be one what the worse for having died*. I believe concerning those new bodies that there will be no trace upon them of the feebleness of old age, none of the marks of long and wearying sickness, none of the scars of martyrdom. Death

shall not have left his mark upon them at all, except it be some glory mark which shall be to their honour, like the scars in the flesh of the Wellbeloved, which are his chief beauty even now in the eyes of those for whom his hands and feet were pierced. In this sense death shall be destroyed because he shall have done no damage to the saints at all, the very trace of decay shall have been swept away from the redeemed.

And then, finally, there shall, after this trumpet of the Lord, be no *more death*, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things have passed away. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him"; and so also the quickened ones, his own redeemed, they too shall die no more. Oh dreadful, dreadful supposition, that they should ever have to undergo temptation or pain, or death a second time. It cannot be. "Because I live," says Christ, "they shall live also." Yet the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul having been given up by some, certain of them have felt obliged to give up with the eternity of future punishment the eternity of future bliss, and assuredly as far as some great proof texts are concerned, they stand or fall together. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal"; if the one state be short so must the other be: whatever the adjective means in the one case it means in the other. To us the word means endless duration in both cases, and we look forward to a bliss which shall never know end or duration. Then in the tearless, sorrowless, graveless country death shall be utterly destroyed.

III. And now last of all, and the word "last" sounds fitly in this case, **DEATH IS TO BE DESTROYED LAST.** Because he came in last he must go out last. Death was not the first of our foes: first came the devil, then sin, then death. Death is not the worst of enemies; death is an enemy, but he is much to be preferred to our other adversaries. It were better to die a thousand times than to sin. To be tried by death is nothing compared with being tempted by the devil. The mere physical pains connected with dissolution are comparative trifles compared with the hideous grief which is caused by sin and the burden which a sense of guilt causes to the soul. No, death is but a secondary mischief compared with the defilement of sin. Let the great enemies go down first; smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered; let sin, and Satan, the lord of all these evils, be smitten first, and death may well be left to the last.

Notice, that death is the last enemy to each individual Christian and the last to be destroyed. Well now, if the word of God says it is the last I want to remind you of a little piece of practical wisdom,—leave him to be the last. Brother, do not dispute the appointed order, but let the last be last. I have known a brother wanting to vanquish death long before he died. But, brother, you do not want dying grace till dying moments. What would be the good of dying grace while you are yet alive? A boat will only be needful when you reach a river. Ask for living grace, and glorify Christ thereby, and then you shall have dying grace when dying time comes. Your enemy is going to be destroyed, but not to-day. There is a great host of enemies to be fought to-day, and you may be content to let this one alone for a while. This enemy will be destroyed, but of the times and the seasons we are in

ignorance ; our wisdom is to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ as the duty of every day requires. Take your trials as they come, brother ! As the enemies march up slay them, rank upon rank, but if you fail in the name of God to smite the front ranks, and say "No, I am only afraid of the rear rank," then you are playing the fool. Leave the final shock of arms till the last adversary advances, and meanwhile hold you your place in the conflict. God will in due time help you to overcome your last enemy, but meanwhile see to it that you overcome the world, the the flesh, and the devil. If you live well you will die well. That same covenant in which the Lord Jesus gave you life contains also the grant of death, for "All things are yours, whether things present or things to come, or life or death, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Why is death left to the last ? Well, I think it is because Christ can make much use of him. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, because death is of great service before he is destroyed. Oh, what lessons some of us have learned from death ! "Our dying friends come o'er us like a cloud to damp our brainless ardours," to make us feel that these poor fleeting toys are not worth living for ; that as others pass away so must we also be gone, and thus they help to make us set loose by this world, and urge us to take wing and mount towards the world to come. There are, perhaps, no sermons like the deaths which have happened in our households ; the departure of our beloved friends have been to us solemn discourses of divine wisdom, which our heart could not help hearing. So Christ has spared death to make him a preacher to his saints.

And you know, brethren, that if there had been no death the saints of God would not have had the opportunity to exhibit the highest ardour of their love. Where has love to Christ triumphed most ? Why, in the death of the martyrs at the stake and on the rack. O Christ, thou never hadst such garlands woven for thee by human hands as they have brought thee who have come up to heaven from the forests of persecution, having waded through streams of blood. By death for Christ the saints have glorified him most.

So is it in their measure with saints who die from ordinary deaths ; they would have had no such test for faith and work for patience as they now have if there had been no death. Part of the reason of the continuance of this dispensation is that the Christ of God may be glorified, but if believers never died, the supreme consummation of faith's victory must have been unknown. Brethren, if I may die as I have seen some of our church members die, I court the grand occasion. I would not wish to escape death by some by-road if I may sing as they sang. If I may have such hosannas and hallelujahs beaming in my very eyes as I have seen as well as heard from them, it were a blessed thing to die. Yes, as a supreme test of love and faith, death is well respited awhile to let the saints glorify their Master.

Besides, brethren, without death we should not be so conformed to Christ as we shall be if we fall asleep in him. If there could be any jealousies in heaven among the saints, I think that any saint who does not die, but is changed when Christ comes, could almost meet me and you, who probably will die, and say "My brother, there is one thing I

have missed, I never lay in the grave, I never had the chill hand of death laid on me, and so in that I was not conformed to my Lord. But *you* know what it is to have fellowship with him, even in his death." Did I not well say that they that were alive and remain should have no preference over them that are asleep? I think the preference if anything shall belong to us who sleep in Jesus, and wake up in his likeness.

Death, dear friends, is not yet destroyed, because he brings the saints home. He does but come to them and whisper his message, and in a moment they are supremely blessed.

"Have done with sin and care and woe,
And with the Saviour rest."

And so death is not destroyed yet, for he answers useful purposes.

But, beloved, he is going to be destroyed. He is the last enemy of the church collectively. The church as a body has had a mass of foes to contend with, but after the resurrection we shall say, "This is the last enemy. Not another foe is left." Eternity shall roll on in ceaseless bliss. There may be changes, bringing new delights; perhaps in the eternity to come there may be eras and ages of yet more amazing bliss, and still more superlative ecstasy; but there shall be

"No rude alarm of raging foes,
No cares to break the last repose."

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, and if the last be slain there can be no future foe. The battle is fought and the victory is won for ever. And who hath won it? who but the Lamb that sitteth on the throne, to whom let us all ascribe honour, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might, for ever and ever. The Lord help us in our solemn adoration. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Cor. xv. 1—34.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 848, 841.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE GREAT BIRTHDAY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24TH, 1876, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."—Luke ii. 10.

THERE is no reason upon earth beyond that of ecclesiastical custom why the 25th of December should be regarded as the birthday of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ any more than any other day from the first of January to the last day of the year; and yet some persons regard Christmas with far deeper reverence than the Lord's-day. You will often hear it asserted that "The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants," but it is not so. There are Protestants who have absorbed a great deal beside the Bible into their religion, and among other things they have accepted the authority of what they call "the Church," and by that door all sorts of superstitions have entered. There is no authority whatever in the word of God for the keeping of Christmas at all, and no reason for keeping it just now except that the most superstitious section of Christendom has made a rule that December 25th shall be observed as the birthday of the Lord, and the church by law established in this land has agreed to follow in the same track. You are under no bondage whatever to regard the regulation. We owe no allegiance to the ecclesiastical powers which have made a decree on this matter, for we belong to an old-fashioned church which does not dare to make laws, but is content to obey them. At the same time the day is no worse than another, and if you choose to observe it, and observe it unto the Lord, I doubt not he will accept your devotion: while if you do not observe it, but unto the Lord observe it not, for fear of encouraging superstition and will-worship I doubt not but what you shall be as accepted in the non-observance as you could have been in the observance of it. Still, as the thoughts of a great many Christian people will run at this time towards the birth of Christ, and as this cannot be wrong, I judged it meet to avail ourselves of the prevailing current, and float down the stream of thought. Our minds will run

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that way, because so many around us are following customs suggestive of it, therefore let us get what good we can out of the occasion. There can be no reason why we should not, and it may be helpful that we should, now consider the birth of our Lord Jesus. We will do that voluntarily which we would refuse to do as a matter of obligation: we will do that simply for convenience sake which we should not think of doing because enjoined by authority or demanded by superstition.

The shepherds were keeping their flocks by night; probably a calm, peaceful night, wherein they felt the usual difficulty of keeping their weary eyelids still uplifted as sleep demanded its due of them. On a sudden, to their amazement, a mighty blaze lit up the heavens, and turned midnight into midday. The glory of the Lord, by which, according to the idiom of the language, is meant the greatest conceivable glory as well as a divine glory, surrounded and alarmed them, and in the midst of it they saw a shining spirit, a form the like of which they had never beheld before, but of which they had heard their fathers speak, and of which they had read in the books of the prophets, so that they knew it to be an angel. It was indeed no common messenger from heaven, but "the angel of the Lord," that choice presence angel, whose privilege it is to stand nearest the heavenly majesty, "mid the bright ones doubly bright," and to be employed on weightiest errands from the eternal throne. "The angel of the Lord came upon them." Are you astonished that at first they were afraid? Would not you be alarmed if such a thing should happen to you? The stillness of the night, the suddenness of the apparition, the extraordinary splendour of the light, the supernatural appearance of the angel—all would tend to astound them, and to put them into a quiver of reverential alarm; for I doubt not there was a mixture both of reverence and of fear in that feeling which is described as being "sore afraid." They would have fallen on their faces to the ground in fright, had there not dropped out of that "glory of the Lord" a gentle voice, which said, "Fear not." They were calmed by that sweet comfort, and enabled to listen to the announcement which followed. Then that voice, in accents sweet as the notes of a silver bell, proceeded to say, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." They were bidden to shake off all thoughts of fear, and to give themselves up to joy. Doubtless they did so, and amongst all mankind there were none so happy at that dead of night as were these shepherds, who had seen an amazing sight, which they would never forget, and now were consulting whether they should not haste away to gaze upon a sight which would be more delightful still, namely, the Babe whereof the angel spoke.

May great joy be upon us also while our thought shall be that *the birth of Christ is the cause of supreme joy*. When we have spoken upon this we shall have to enquire, *to whom does that joy belong*; and thirdly, we shall consider, *how they shall express that joy while they possess it*. May the Holy Spirit now reveal the Lord Jesus to us, and prepare us to rejoice in him.

I. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST SHOULD BE THE SUBJECT OF SUPREME JOY. Rightly so. We have the angelic warrant for rejoicing because Christ

is born. It is a truth so full of joy that it caused the angel who came to announce it to be filled with gladness. He had little to do with the fact, for Christ took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham; but I suppose that the very thought that the Creator should be linked with the creature, that the great Invisible and Omnipotent should come into alliance with that which he himself had made, caused the angel as a creature to feel that all creatureship was elevated, and this made him glad. Beside, there was a sweet benevolence of spirit in the angel's bosom which made him happy because he had such gladsome tidings to bring to the fallen sons of men. Albeit they are not our brethren, yet do angels take a loving concern in all our affairs. They rejoice over us when we repent, they are ministering spirits when we are saved, and they bear us aloft when we depart; and sure we are that they can never be unwilling servants to their Lord, or tardy helpers of his beloved ones. They are friends of the Bridegroom and rejoice in his joy, they are household servants of the family of love, and they wait upon us with an eager diligence, which betokens the tenderness of feeling which they have towards the King's sons. Therefore the angel delivered his message cheerfully, as became the place from which he came, the theme which brought him down, and his own interest therein. He said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy," and we are sure he spake in accents of delight. Yea, so glad were angels at this gospel, that when the discourse was over, one angel having evangelized and given out the gospel for the day, suddenly a band of choristers appeared and sang an anthem loud and sweet that there might be a full service at the first propounding of the glad tidings of great joy. A multitude of the heavenly host had heard that a chosen messenger had been sent to proclaim the new-born King, and, filled with holy joy and adoration, they gathered up their strength to pursue him, for they could not let him go to earth alone on such an errand. They overtook him just as he had reached the last word of his discourse, and then they broke forth in that famous chorale, the only one sung of angels that was ever heard by human ears here below, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Thus, I say, they had full service; there was gospel ministry in rich discourse concerning Christ, and there was hearty and devout praise from a multitude all filled with heavenly joy. It was so glad a message that they could not let it be simply spoken by a solitary voice, though that were an angel's, but they must needs pour forth a glad chorus of praise, singing unto the Lord a new song. Brothers, if the birth of Jesus was so gladsome to our cousins the angels, what should it be to us? If it made our neighbours sing who had comparatively so small a share in it, how should it make us leap for joy? Oh, if it brought heaven down to earth, should not our songs go up to heaven? If heaven's gate of pearl was set open at its widest, and a stream of shining ones came running downward to the lower skies, to anticipate the time when they shall all descend in solemn pomp at the glorious advent of the great King; if it emptied heaven for a while to make earth so glad, ought not our thoughts and praises and all our loves to go pouring up to the eternal gate, leaving earth a while that we may crowd heaven with the songs of mortal men? Yea, verily, so let it be.

"Glory to the new-born King!
 Let us all the anthem sing,
 'Peace on earth, and mercy mild;
 God and sinners reconciled.'"

For, first, *the birth of Christ was the incarnation of God*: it was God taking upon himself human nature—a mystery, a wondrous mystery, to be believed in rather than to be defined. Yet so it was that in the manger lay an infant, who was also infinite, a feeble child who was also the Creator of heaven and earth. How this could be we do not know, but that it was so we assuredly believe, and therein do we rejoice: for if God thus take upon himself human nature, then manhood is not abandoned nor given up as hopeless. When manhood had broken the bonds of the covenant, and snatched from the one reserved tree the fruit forbidden, God might have said, "I give thee up, O Adam, and cast off thy race. Even as I gave up Lucifer and all his host, so I abandon thee to follow thine own chosen course of rebellion!" But we have now no fear that the Lord has done this, for God has espoused manhood and taken it into union with himself. Now manhood is not put aside by the Lord as an utterly accursed thing, to be an abomination unto him for ever, for Jesus, the Well-beloved, is born of a virgin. God would not so have taken manhood into union with himself if he had not said, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it." I know the curse has fallen upon men because they have sinned, but evidently not on manhood in the abstract, for else had not Christ come to take upon himself the form of man and to be born of woman. The word made flesh means hope for manhood, notwithstanding its fall. The race is not to be outlawed, and marked with the brand of death and hell, and to be utterly abandoned to destruction, for, lo, the Lord hath married into the race, and the Son of God has become the Son of man. This is enough to make all that is within us sing for joy.

Then, too, if God has taken manhood into union with himself, he loves man and means man's good. Behold what manner of love God hath bestowed upon us that he should espouse our nature! For God had never so united himself with any creature before. His tender mercy had ever been over all his works, but they were still so distinct from himself that a great gulf was fixed between the Creator and the created, so far as existence and relationship are concerned. The Lord had made many noble intelligences, principalities, and powers of whom we know little; we do not even know what those four living creatures may be who are nearest the eternal presence; but God had never taken up the nature of any of them, nor allied himself with them by any actual union with his person. But, lo, he has allied himself with man, that creature a little lower than the angels, that creature who is made to suffer death by reason of his sin; God has come into union with man, and therefore full sure he loves him unutterably well, and has great thoughts of good towards him. If a king's son doth marry a rebel, then for that rebel race there are prospects of reconciliation, pardon, and restoration. There must be in the great heart of the Divine One wondrous thoughts of pity and condescending love, if He deigns to take human nature into union with himself. Joy, joy for ever, let us sound the loud cymbals of delight, for the incarnation bodes good to our race.

If God has taken manhood into union with himself then God will feel for man, he will have pity upon him, he will remember that he is dust, he will have compassion upon his infirmities and sicknesses. You know, beloved, how graciously it is so, for that same Jesus who was born of a woman at Bethlehem is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, having been tempted in all points like as we are. Such intimate practical sympathy would not have belonged to our great High Priest if he had not become man. Not even though he be divine could he have been perfect in sympathy with us if he had not also become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. The Captain of our salvation could only be made perfect through suffering; it must needs be that since the children were partakers of flesh and blood he himself also should take part of the same. For this again we may ring the silver bells, since the Son of God now intimately sympathizes with man because he is made in all points like unto his brethren.

Further, it is clear that if God condescends to be so intimately allied with manhood, he intends to deliver man, and to bless him. Incarnation prophesies salvation. Oh, believing soul, thy God cannot mean to curse thee. Look at God incarnate! What redest thou there but salvation? God in human flesh must mean that God intends to set man above all the works of his hands, and to give him dominion, according to his first intent, over all sheep and oxen and all that pass through the paths of the sea and the air; yea it must mean that there is to be a man beneath whose feet all things shall be placed, so that even death itself shall be subject unto him. When God stoops down to man it must mean that man is to be lifted up to God. What joy there is in this! Oh that our hearts were but half alive to the incarnation! Oh that we did but know a thousandth part of the unutterable delight which is hidden in this thought, that the Son of God was born a man at Bethlehem! Thus you see that there is overflowing cause for joy in the birth of Christ, because it was the incarnation of the Deity.

But further, the angel explained our cause for joy by saying that *he who was born was unto us a Saviour*. "Unto you is born this day a Saviour." Brothers and sisters, I know who will be gladdest to-day to think that Christ was born a Saviour. It will be those who are most conscious of their sinnership. If you would draw music out of that ten-stringed harp, the word "Saviour," pass it over to a sinner. "Saviour" is the harp, but "sinner" is the finger that must touch the strings and bring forth the melody. If thou knowest thyself lost by nature and lost by practice, if thou feelest sin like a plague at thy heart, if evil wearies and worries thee, if thou hast known of iniquity the burden and the shame, then will it be bliss to thee even to hear of that Saviour whom the Lord has provided. Even as a babe, Jesus the Saviour will be precious to thee, but most of all because he has now finished all the work of thy salvation. Thou wilt look to the commencement of that work, and then survey it even to its close, and bless and magnify the name of the Lord. Unto you, O ye who are of sinners the chief, even unto you, ye consciously guilty ones, is born a Saviour. He is a Saviour by birth: for this purpose is he born. To save sinners is his birthright and office. It is henceforth an institution of the divine dominion, and an office of the divine nature to save the lost. Henceforth God has laid

help upon One that is mighty, and exalted One chosen out of the people, that he may seek and save that which was lost. Is there not joy in this? Where else is there joy if not here?

Next the angel tells us that *this Saviour is Christ the Lord*, and there is much gladness in that fact. "Christ" signified *anointed*. Now when we know that the Lord Jesus Christ came to save, it is most pleasant to perceive in addition that the Father does not let him enter upon his mission without the necessary qualification. He is anointed of the Highest that he may carry out the offices which he has undertaken: the Spirit of the Lord rested upon him without measure. Our Lord is anointed in a threefold sense, as prophet, priest, and king. It has been well observed that this anointing, in its threefold power, never rested upon any other man. There have been kingly prophets, David to wit; there was one kingly priest, even Melchisedec; and there have also been priestly prophets, such as Samuel. Thus it has come to pass that two of the offices have been united in one man, but the whole three,—prophet, priest, and king, never met in one thrice anointed being until Jesus came. We have the fullest anointing conceivable in Christ, who is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and as the Messiah, the sent One of God, is completely prepared and qualified for all the work of our salvation. Let our hearts be glad. We have not a nominal Saviour, but a Saviour fully equipped; one who in all points is like ourselves, for he is man, but in all points fit to help the feebleness which he has espoused, for he is the anointed man. See what an intimate mingling of the divine and human is found in the angel's song. They sing of him as "a Saviour," and a Saviour must of necessity be divine, in order to save from death and hell; and yet the title is drawn from his dealings with humanity. Then they sing of him as "Christ," and that must be human, for only man can be anointed, yet that unction comes from the Godhead. Sound forth the jubilee trumpets for this marvellously Anointed One, and rejoice in him who is your priest to cleanse you, your prophet to instruct you, and your king to deliver you. The angels sang of him as Lord, and yet as born; so here again the godlike in dominion is joined with the human in birth. How well did the words and the sense agree.

The angel further went on to give these shepherds cause for joy by telling them that while their Saviour was born to be the Lord yet he was so *born in lowliness* that they would find him a babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Is there cause of joy there? I say, ay, indeed there is, for it is the terror of the Godhead which keeps the sinner oftentimes away from reconciliation; but see how the Godhead hath graciously concealed itself in a babe, a little babe,—a babe that needed to be wrapped in swaddling bands like any other new-born child. Who feareth to approach him? Who ever heard of trembling in the presence of a babe? Yet is the Godhead there. My soul, when thou canst not for very amazement stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire, when the divine glory is like a consuming fire to thy spirit, and the sacred majesty of heaven is altogether overpowering to thee, then come thou to this babe, and say, "Yet God is here, and here can I meet him in the person of his dear Son, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Oh, what bliss

there is in incarnation if we remember that herein God's omnipotence cometh down to man's feebleness, and infinite majesty stoops to man's infirmity.

Now mark, the shepherds were not to find this babe wrapped in Tyrian purple nor swathed in choicest fabrics fetched from afar.

"No crown bedecks his forehead fair,
No pearl, nor gem, nor silk is there."

Nor would they discover him in the marble halls of princes, nor guarded by prætorian legionaries, nor lackied by vassal sovereigns, but they would find him the babe of a peasant woman, of princely lineage it is true, but of a family whose stock was dry and forgotten in Israel. The child was reputed to be the son of a carpenter. If you looked on the humble father and mother, and at the poor bed they had made up, where aforetime oxen had come to feed, you would say "This is condescension indeed." O ye poor, be glad, for Jesus is born in poverty, and cradled in a manger. O ye sons of toil rejoice, for the Saviour is born of a lowly virgin, and a carpenter is his foster father. O ye people, oftentimes despised and downtrodden, the Prince of the Democracy is born, one chosen out of the people is exalted to the throne. O ye who call yourselves the aristocracy, behold the Prince of the kings of the earth, whose lineage is divine, and yet there is no room for him in the inn. Behold, O men, the Son of God, who is bone of your bone, intimate with all your griefs, who in his after life hungered as ye hunger, was weary as ye are weary, and wore humble garments like your own; yea, suffered worse poverty than you, for he was without a place whereon to lay his head. Let the heavens and the earth be glad, since God hath so fully, so truly come down to man.

Nor is this all. The angel called for joy, and I ask for it too, on this ground, that *the birth of this child was to bring glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men.* The birth of Christ has given such glory to God as I know not that he could ever have had here by any other means. We must always speak in accents soft and low when we talk of God's glory; in itself it must always be infinite and not to be conceived by us, and yet may we not venture to say that all the works of God's hands do not glorify him so much as the gift of his dear Son, that all creation and all providence do not so well display the heart of Deity as when he gives his Only Begotten and sends him into the world that men may live through him? What wisdom is manifested in the plan of redemption of which the incarnate God is the centre! What love is there revealed! What power is that which brought the Divine One down from glory to the manger; only omnipotence could have worked so great a marvel! What faithfulness to ancient promises! What truthfulness in keeping covenant! What grace, and yet what justice! For it was in the person of that newborn child that the law must be fulfilled, and in his precious body must vengeance find recompense for injuries done to divine righteousness. All the attributes of God were in that little child most marvellously displayed and veiled. Conceive the whole sun to be focussed to a single point and yet so softly revealed as to be endurable by the tenderest eye, even thus the glorious God is brought down for man to see him born

of a woman. Think of it. The express image of God in mortal flesh! The heir of all things cradled in a manger! Marvellous is this! Glory to God in the highest! He has never revealed himself before as he now manifests himself in Jesus.

It is through our Lord Jesus being born that there is already a measure of peace on earth and boundless peace yet to come. Already the teeth of war have been somewhat broken, and a testimony is borne by the faithful against this great crime. The religion of Christ holds up its shield over the oppressed, and declares tyranny and cruelty to be loathsome before God. Whatever abuse and scorn may be heaped upon Christ's true minister he will never be silent while there are downtrodden nationalities and races needing his advocacy, nor will God's servants anywhere, if faithful to the Prince of Peace, ever cease to maintain peace among men to the utmost of their power. The day cometh when this growing testimony shall prevail, and nations shall learn war no more. The Prince of Peace shall snap the spear of war across his knee. He, the Lord of all, shall break the arrows of the bow, the sword and the shield and the battle, and he shall do it in his own dwelling-place, even in Zion, which is more glorious and excellent than all the mountains of prey. As surely as Christ was born at Bethlehem he will yet make all men brothers, and establish a universal monarchy of peace, of which there shall be no end. So let us sing if we value the glory of God, for the new-born child reveals it; and let us sing if we value peace on earth, for he is come to bring it. Yea, and if we love the link which binds glorified heaven with pacified earth,—the good will towards men which the Eternal herein manifests, let us give a third note to our hallelujah and bless and magnify Immanuel, God with us, who has accomplished all this by his birth among us. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

I think I have shown you that there was room enough for joy to the shepherds, but you and I, who live in later days, when we understand the whole business of salvation, ought to be even more glad than they were, though they glorified and praised God for all the things that they had heard and seen. Come, my brethren, let us at least do as much as these simple shepherds, and exult with our whole souls.

II. Secondly, let us consider TO WHOM THIS JOY BELONGS. I was very heavy yesterday in spirit, for this dreary weather tends greatly to depress the mind.

"No lark could pipe to skies so dull and grey."

But a thought struck me and filled me with intense joy. I tell it out to you, not because it will seem anything to you, but as having gladdened myself. It is a bit all for myself to be placed in a parenthesis; it is this, that the joy of the birth of Christ in part *belongs to those who tell it*, for the angels who proclaimed it were exceedingly glad, as glad as glad could be. I thought of this and whispered to my heart, "As I shall tell of Jesus born on earth for men, I will take license to be glad also, glad if for nothing else that I have such a message to bring to them." The tears stood in my eyes, and stand there even now, to think that I should be privileged to say to my fellow men, "God has condescended to assume your nature that he might save you." These

are as glad and as grand words as he of the golden mouth could have spoken. As for Cicero and Demosthenes, those eloquent orators had no such theme to dwell upon. Oh, joy, joy, joy! There was born into this world a man who is also God. My heart dances as David danced before the ark of God.

This joy was meant, not for the tellers of the news alone, but *for all who heard it*. The glad tidings "shall be unto all people." Read "*all the people*," if you like, for so, perhaps, the letter of the original might demand. Well, then, it meant that it was joy to all the nation of the Jews; but assuredly our version is truer to the inner spirit of the text; it is joy to all people upon the face of the earth that Christ is born. There is not a nation under heaven but what has a right to be glad because God has come down among men. Sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem. Take up the strain, O ye dwellers in the wilderness, and let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof! Ye who beneath the frigid zone feel in your very marrow all the force of God's north wind, let your hearts burn within you at this happy truth. And ye whose faces are scorched by the heat of the torrid sun, let this be as a well of water unto you. Exult and magnify Jehovah that his Son, his Only Begotten, is also brother to mankind.

"O wake our hearts, in gladness sing!
And hail each one the newborn King,
Till living song from loving souls
Like sound of mighty waters roll."

But brethren they do not all rejoice, not even all of those who know this glorious truth, nor does it stir the hearts of half mankind. To whom, then, is it a joy? I answer, *to all who believe it*, and especially to all who believe it as the shepherds did, with that faith which staggers not through unbelief. The shepherds never had a doubt: the light, the angels, and the song were enough for them; they accepted the glad tidings without a single question. In this the shepherds were both happy and wise, ay, wiser than the would-be wise whose wisdom can only manifest itself in cavilling. This present age despises the simplicity of a childlike faith, but how wonderfully God is rebuking its self-conceit. He is taking the wise in their own craftiness. I could not but notice in the late discovery of the famous Greek cities and the sepulchres of the heroes, the powerful rebuke which the spirit of scepticism has received. These wise doubters have been taken on their own ground and put to confusion. Of course they told us that old Homer was himself a myth, and the poem called by his name was a mere collection of unfounded legends and mere tales. Some ancient songster did but weave his dreams into poetry and foist them upon us as the blind minstrel's song: there was no fact in it, they said, nor indeed in any current history; everything was mere legend. Long ago these gentlemen told us that there was no King Arthur, no William Tell, no anybody indeed. Even as they questioned all sacred records, so have they cast suspicion upon all else that common men believe. But lo, the ancient cities speak, the heroes are found in their tombs; the child's faith is vindicated. They have disinterred the king of men, and this and other matters speak in tones of thunder to the unbe-

lieving ear, and say, "Ye fools, the simpletons believed and were wiser than your 'culture' made you. Your endless doubts have led you into falsehood and not into truth."

The shepherds believed and were glad as glad could be, but if Professor — (never mind his name) had been there on that memorable night he would certainly have debated with the angel, and denied that a Saviour was needed at all. He would coolly have taken notes for a lecture upon the nature of light, and have commenced a disquisition upon the cause of certain remarkable nocturnal phenomena, which had been seen in the fields near Bethlehem. Above all he would have assured the shepherds of the absolute non-existence of anything superhuman. Have not the learned men of our age proved that impossibility scores of times with argument sufficient to convince a wooden post? They have made it as plain as that three times two are eighteen that there is no God, nor angel, nor spirit. They have proved beyond all doubt, as far as their own dogmatism is concerned, that everything is to be doubted which is most sure, and that nothing is to be believed at all except the infallibility of pretenders to science. But these men find no comfort, neither are they so weak as to need any, so they say. Their teaching is not glad tidings but a wretched negation, a killing frost which nips all noble hopes in the bud, and in the name of reason steals away from man his truest bliss. Be it ours to be as philosophical as the shepherds, for they did not believe too much, but simply believed what was well attested, and this they found to be true upon personal investigation. In faith lies joy. If our faith can realize we shall be happy now. I want this morning to feel as if I saw the glory of the Lord still shining in the heavens, for it was there, though I did not see it. I wish I could see that angel, and hear him speak; but, failing this, I know he did speak, though I did not hear him. I am certain that those shepherds told no lies, nor did the Holy Ghost deceive us when he bade his servant Luke write this record. Let us forget the long interval between and only recollect that it was really so. Realize that which was indeed matter of fact, and you may almost hear the angelic choir up in yonder sky singing still, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." At any rate, our hearts rehearse the anthem and we feel the joy of it, by simply believing, even as the shepherds did.

Mark well, that believing what they did these simple-minded shepherds *desired to approach nearer* the marvellous babe. What did they do but consult together and say, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass"? O beloved, if you want to get the joy of Christ, come near to him. Whatever you hear about him from his own book, believe it; but then say, "I will go and find him." When you hear the voice of the Lord from Sinai draw not nigh unto the flaming mountain, the law condemns you, the justice of God overwhelms you. Bow at a humble distance and adore with solemn awe. But when you hear of God in Christ hasten hither. Hasten hither with all confidence, for you are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, but ye are come unto the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. Come near, come nearer, nearer still. "Come," is his own word to those

who labour and are heavy laden, and that selfsame word he will address to you at the last—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." If you want joy in Christ come and find it in his bosom, or at his feet; there John and Mary found it long ago.

And then, my brethren, do what the shepherds did when they came near. *They rejoiced to see the babe of whom they had been told.* You cannot see with the physical eye, but you must meditate, and so see with the mental eye this great, and grand, and glorious truth that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. This is the way to have joy to-day, joy such as fitly descends from heaven with the descent of heaven's King. Believe, draw near, and then fixedly gaze upon him, and so be blest.

"Hark how all the welkin rings
Glory to the King of kings!
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.

"Veil'd in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to appear,
Jesus our Immanuel here."

III. My time has fled, else I desired to have shown, in the third place, HOW THAT JOY SHOULD BE MANIFESTED. I will only give a hint or two. The way in which many believers in Christmas keep the feast we know too well. This is a Christian country, is it not? I have been told so so often that I suppose it must be true. It is a Christian country! But the Christianity is of a remarkable kind! It is not only that in the olden time "Christmas broached the mightiest ale," but nowadays Christmas keepers must needs get drunk upon it. I slander not our countrymen when I say that drunkenness seems to be one of the principal items of their Christmastide delight. If Bacchus were born at this time I do think England keeps the birthday of that detestable deity most appropriately, but tell me not that it is the birth of the holy child Jesus that they thus celebrate. Is he not crucified afresh by such blasphemy? Surely to the wicked, Jesus saith, "What hast thou to do to keep my birthday and mention my name in connection with thy gluttony and drunkenness?" Shame that there should be any cause for such words. Tenfold shame that there should be so much.

You may keep his birthday all the year round, for it were better to say he was born every day of the year than on any one, for truly in a spiritual sense he is born every day of every year in some men's hearts, and that to us is a far weightier point than the observation of holy days. Express your joy, first, as the angels did, by public ministry. Some of us are called to speak to the many. Let us in the clearest and most earnest tones proclaim the Saviour and his power to rescue man. Others of you cannot *preach*, but you can *sing*. Sing then your anthems, and praise God with all your hearts. Do not be slack in the devout use of your tongues, which are the glory of your frames, but again and again and again lift up your joyful hymns unto the new-born King. Others of you can neither preach nor sing. Well, then, you must do

what the shepherds did, and what did they? You are told twice that they *spread the news*. As soon as they had seen the babe they made known abroad the saying that was told them, and as they went home they glorified God. This is one of the most practical ways of showing your joy. Holy conversation is as acceptable as sermons and anthems. There was also one who said little, but thought the more: "*Mary pondered all these things in her heart.*" Quiet, happy spirit, weigh in thy heart the grand truth that Jesus was born at Bethlehem. Immanuel, God with us;—weigh it if you can; look at it again and again, examine the varied facets of this priceless brilliant, and bless, and adore, and love, and wonder, and yet adore again this matchless miracle of love.

Lastly, *go and do good to others*. Like the wise men, bring your offerings, and offer to the new-born King your heart's best gold of love, and frankincense of praise, and myrrh of penitence. Bring everything of your heart's best, and somewhat of your substance also, for this is a day of good tidings, and it were unseemly to appear before the Lord empty. Come and worship God manifest in the flesh, and be filled with his light and sweetness by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke ii. 1—21.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—249, 260, 256.

END OF VOLUME XXII.





